THE LETTERS OF DISRAELI TO LADY CHESTERFIELD AND LADY BRADFORD

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THE LETTERS OF DISRAELI
TO
LADY CHESTERFIELD *and* LADY BRADFORD

SELINA, COUNTESS OF BRADFORD

The Letters of
DISRAELI

To Lady Chesterfield
And Lady Bradford

Edited by the Marquis of Zetland

Foreword by André Maurois

VOLUME TWO
1876 to 1881

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THE LETTERS OF DISRAELI
TO
LADY CHESTERFIELD *and* LADY BRADFORD

VOLUME TWO

CHAPTER I

January–March 1876

SKIRMISHES IN THE COMMONS

The New Year saw Disraeli at Hughenden, hard at work on public business, but making time to write on many matters in addition to affairs of State. Lady Bradford had read "Alroy," and not only read it but criticised it. Disraeli was delighted:

January 5th, 1876

. . . I should be most affected if I pretended I was not interested, and deeply, in your reading the other book and especially in your criticism. When I wrote it I was very young and had the fancy that I could form a new style, founded in some degree on Arabian prose, which admits rhythm and sometimes—as in the Korân which is a classic—even rhyme. But I wanted to combine all this with the familiar treatment of more familiar things, so that the style should vary with the subject; and though the occasion should be taken for the highest bursts of poetry, were I capable of them, the simplest narrative, the most natural dialogue, and even comic and sarcastic pictures of life, should be alike admitted. The world was then satiated by a generation of great poets. People shrank from verse and I sought to give them poetry without numbers—or not too much of them. Society decided against the experiment and it was a disappointment to me. "Alroy" has lived from other qualities. Had I pursued the plan, I am not sure I should not have ultimately succeeded—as, for instance, Carlyle. He has succeeded, after long neglect and constant protest against his principles of composition, in making the world not only admire but read him. However, public affairs attracted me, and one of the consequences of Lord Grey's Reform Bill was that it prevented, perhaps, a literary revolution.

In the same letter he wrote disgustedly of certain by-elections then in progress which he thought were being mismanaged; and he complained of having "to announce the great Indian change somewhat sooner" than was intended, owing to news of it leaking out. "There is always a traitor—except in the Suez Canal business." But before concluding he returned to pleasanter topics. A portrait of Lady Bradford—almost despaired of by now—was at last to make its entry into the Hughenden Collection:

I am now going to write a few lines to the artist of your picture. I am so charmed with it and think so highly of its execution, that it seems to me due to him. I have been rarely in my life more gratified by anything than by its arrival. I assure you I would sooner have it than stars and garters. Don't think this hyperbole. Monty thinks it is "a striking likeness now"; and no doubt Sir Francis[1] never caught the expression of a countenance more happily and more completely. I agree with Monty it is a striking likeness; but there is a face which I still more admire, and it is the same stilled, as it were, and more profound from the inevitable influence of some years of thought and feeling. That is the face of one whose kindness to me sustains me in the sunset of life and under the weight of many cares; and I am hers devotedly,

---

[1] Sir F. Grant.

D

Lady Bradford upbraided him for his pessimism over the by-elections, and on the 8th he wrote in reply—"Affairs are very stirring and with the Austrian Note and all its mighty contingencies and complications I have not time to think of our vexatious elections; but I dare say they will all go right —and if you think so I am easily persuaded." He was invited to Weston and jumped at the invitation:

To Lady Chesterfield

Weston,
January 13th, 1876

I know, dear Darling, you have heard enough of me these last days and, perhaps, too much. And nothing has happened to make my writing to you at all interesting. I am fairly well and fairly happy—the latter unusual with me, as you know. . . . Bradford is in very good humor—it may be said sustained good humor! May it last! . . . If the Austrian Note does not force me up before, I may stay here till Monday. The Cabinet meets on Tuesday.

Disraeli was still engaged with the Austrian Note when a sharp attack of gout came as an unpleasant reminder of his physical frailty:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
Half past 12, January 18th, 1876

I have had a very sharp attack—and nothing but remedies as sharp could have brought me to time—as I hope they have—for in an hour and a half I must be at the Cabinet. It would not do to hold it here: it would be such a bad start—and the day is bland and one must run risks in life or else it would be as dull as death.

"M.D." did not dine. Being indisposed I got away by 10 o'clock feeling worse every moment, but it was a satisfaction to have seen him. Things not very satisfactory, though he had done all I wished; but our delay so alarmed Austria, who is afraid of Hungary, that Andrassy had offered all sorts of concessions to the Porte, provided the Porte would signify to England that the Porte wished us to join with the other Powers. And the day I was with Derby he expected this: and, sure enough, yesterday Musurus brought it. We can't be more Turkish than the Sultan's—"plus Arabe que l'Arabie." I think they have only postponed the crisis, which will happen in the Spring I fancy.

I thank you for your letters—they are like the visits of birds to a sick man, or the breath of fragrant winds.

Your

D

With so many matters of importance claiming his attention, Disraeli could not afford to lie up, and his letters for the next few days give a graphic picture of him struggling against ill-health. "I have had the illness of a month crammed and compressed into eight and forty hours," he wrote on the 18th, and on the 19th—"I can only write a line to say I have just got back from the Cabinet and in a very prostrate state. The Faery has relieved me from going to Osborne which was, indeed, impossible; but telegraphs every hour to have Sir W. Jenner, and to know whether I yet have him. I have no opinion of Sir W. Jenner though I know you have—and that's in his favor. I think my man is treating me right. He has checked and much controlled the coughing but the gout is everywhere about me." And for some days longer accounts of his health intruded themselves in all his letters:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
Half past 6, January 20th, 1876

I fear this will hardly be in time even for our post. I got back from the Cabinet at half past 5 and found Lytton waiting for me and now he has just gone. I knew him really before he was born—a few months; and now I see him here and a Viceroy. He told me his first remembrance of me was calling on him at a little school he was at—at Twickenham—and I "tipped" him. It was the first "tip" he ever had; and now I have tipped him again and put a crown on his head! It's like meeting the first character of a play in the last scene!

There will be no more Cabinets till Monday—and I hope to get right by that time. My colleagues all thought I was looking much better to-day, and so I tell you. I judged from their expression and general mien that they thought the "Burial Bill," which we were discussing, was rather a fitting subject for their chief. I think I have turned the corner, but am very weak.

To Lady Chesterfield

2 Whitehall Gardens,
January 21st, 1876

I must write you a little line, dear Darling, because you are the most faithful of my correspondents—and one of the dearest. I get on well: the enemy is conquered, but I am very weak, and Leggatt will not give me tonics—at least not yet. He says I shall probably be able to do without them—and so much the better! . . .

There is no Cabinet to-day and will not be till Monday, but this is past six o'clock and I have not left my chair. There is so much to do and telegrams from all parts of the world, especially Turkey and Egypt, which require more nerve than a gentleman has who may not take tonics.

Lord Derby has gone down to Osborne to-day.

I ought to be able to say more, but my head is quite fuddled—not my heart—for I am

affectionately your

D

To Lady Chesterfield

2 Whitehall Gardens.
January 24th, 1876

Dear Darling,

Only a telegram, not a letter. It is now half past 6 o'clock and the Cabinet is only just over. A delicious day: the breeze bland, the air blue and golden. The moment my daily doctor had departed I went out and walked—the first time since my return to town. I was delighted and not a little surprised to find myself so strong. I had fancied even my walking days were over.

There is a Cabinet Council to-morrow at 3 o'clock, and there is as much business as would occupy ten Cabinets and ten Prime Ministers; however it must all be done.

Your affect.

D

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
January 27th, 1876

We have now some rather fine, open weather here, and my medico has insisted upon my walking out in the mornings. This, I hope, has contributed to my welfare; but it is worse than an income tax on my time. For I scarcely get home and restored than Cabinets follow which seldom cease till 6 o'clock, and then there is a hurry-skurry for the post and only half that is necessary is ever done. So I have not been able for two days to write to you—for I could only have sent you brief and feeble words which I don't care to write, and which, I think I have observed—very properly—you don't care to receive.

This is not much better; but at any rate to-day I have not the excuse of the Cabinet, for it will not meet till Monday or Tuesday and then for the Queen's speech. That will be an important document and I am now writing it. Business is very severe, or I am less able than of yore to cope with it; but I have no rest and the affairs of the Court worry me. I have not been sure until the last 8 and 40, or, rather 4 and 20, hours, that the Prince of Wales after all would return. This has involved me in lengthy correspondence when my mind was on greater things. The Queen has been quite right throughout this business, which I now hope and believe will end well.

Lady Augusta Stanley is in a hopeless state—but not of immediate result. The Queen paid her a farewell visit the other day and wrote to me one or two letters on friendship and her feelings as to public life and politics, very remarkable and such as, I think, were never addressed before to a Minister of State.

The death of Callender has delayed all my baronetcies which is rather plaguy, as we wanted them out before Parliament. . . .

It seems a long time since I saw you—though you have been most kind in writing. The work is great, the responsibility greater; but what is most grievous is day after day goes over without a kind word, or a sweet look, to soften life. In this your letters are invaluable to

Your ever

D.

It was fortunate for his Government that Disraeli's health stood the strain to which he subjected it, for the Session was approaching, and lively scenes were everywhere expected:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
January 28th, 1876

A most busy day—but I have written the Queen's speech —it is now copying—and then to the Printer and will be circulated in the Cabinet to-morrow, and on Monday we shall meet and settle it. This is something—what they call a great fact—and gives me a little spirit, which is needed when one has been writing all the morning with flaring candles and a black yellow fog.

There is to be war to the knife when the Houses meet; at least the Flea [2] told me so whom I met yesterday morn. Gladstone is to rush into the arena; but Lowe is to be awful—crushing, overwhelming: a great invective against a stock-jobbing Ministry. I told the Flea that I doubted not that there would be a great deal of noise; but that he might bet that there would be no division. So he will say that all about town.

Shall I ever see you again? Or hear from you? I hope to-morrow.

Your

D

Disraeli's mild reproach in his letter to Lady Bradford of January 27th brought a swift retort, to which he replied on January 29th:

2 Whitehall Gardens

Hoity Toity! What a scolding, and what an unjust one! I never said you did not care for my letters, which would have been coxcombical—only that the brief, dull words I have sent of late, with neither fact, feeling nor fancy, I was ashamed to write; and you, I suspected, not very pleased to receive. Upon which it is intimated, as usual, that I am the vainest of men, and you I am assured, which was quite unnecessary, are the sternest of women.

---

[2] A Mr. Fleming.

London has been for 8 and 40 hours in a thick fog which does not add inspiration to our labors. The Cabinet are scattered—at least I have seen none—and nobody else except Drummond Wolff, who would see me about Suez Canal and is a clever fellow. He is the author of two letters which have appeared in the *Times* on the subject, signed "Memnon," and which have made a great sensation. . . .

Your

D

Strange how amid all the cares of State, this septuagenarian Prime Minister delighted in assuming the part of a gallant:

To Lady Bradford

January 31st, 1876

I have brought your picture up to town. Bradford saw it yesterday but was not in the least annoyed or surprised. I could not bear its being in a Buckinghamshire exile for months—even though I might be solaced in the interval by the presence of the original. We both agreed it was very like now. And when I first saw her, she had curls. Oh! dream of dreams! To think that day—and that careless hour—I met my fate!

A telegram is brought in and the tone of the letter undergoes swift change:

The telegraph from Turkey and from Egypt never stops. I received nearly a dozen telegrams yesterday from the Bosphorus and the Nile. It's rather nervous work; but a good Parliamentary debate or two will clear the atmosphere.

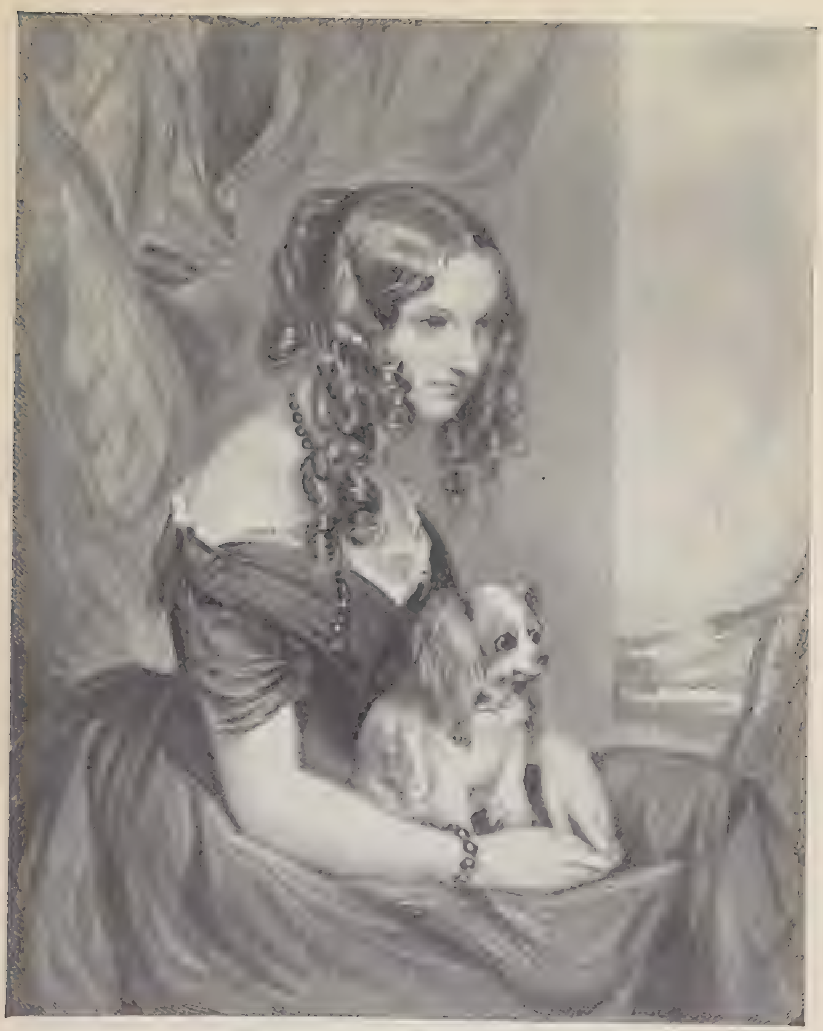
Again the mood changes and the letter finishes on a note of reckless gallantry:

> It seems incredible that we shall soon meet! I hope you will not affect, as you generally do, not to be the least glad. . . . And now adieu! Friends who are "stern," or "true," or "truest" are alike indifferent to me. I never wish to have any. Friendship is a sentiment I never could comprehend—and am more incapable of it at this moment than at any period of my life. And that's saying a good deal. But my heart is not insensible. Grace and beauty and sweetness of disposition and a bright intelligence, which can be alike serious and playful, these are charms for me; and because I find these qualities combined in a greater degree in yourself than in any other person I know, I am
>
> Your loving
>
> D

At the end of January Lady Chesterfield came to London—an event upon which one would have expected Disraeli to have congratulated himself. Yet—in his letters to Lady Bradford at any rate—he spoke of the necessity of calling on her almost as an infliction!—"I am going to call at tea-time on Bretby. It is a dreadful tax at this moment when one is either occupied or exhausted, and when one can endure no presence except that of intense sympathy; but I think it pleases you and that thought sustains one." His mood of irritation was due, perhaps, to his physical condition, for in the same letter he spoke scathingly of John Bright—"We have got a good candidate for Manchester and I am told that the affair looks well, though if we win we beat Bright's brother, Jacob, who I always think a better fellow than Bright, who is both affected and conceited. His head has not been strong enough for his success." And in any case his irritation was soon forgotten, for he wrote on February 3rd—"I found our dear darling very well yesterday and looking very well. I am now going to try to call on her again, as soon it will not be often in my power. When I am calling on her I am always thinking of you—and so one goes on in a medley of feeling and fierce action." A day or two later Lady Bradford arrived in London, and on February 7th Disraeli wrote—"I had a very long letter this morning from my principal correspondent as I must now call her, as you are in town and my morning post is blank. It alarmed me; but it was only a hurricane of words about vivisection which can't be put in her speech now." An unwelcome fog affected Disraeli's throat again and Lady Bradford upbraided him for not remaining indoors. He replied the same day:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
February 12th, 1876

I always wish to do what you like, but I could not have the Cabinet here: it would have been telegraphed over all Europe. But I have taken every possible care of myself and I have every inducement to do so, for on it depends my seeing you to-morrow. I see you so cruelly little and life is to me so dreary without your society, that if the deprivation is continued and prolonged, I feel sure I shall never be well. I am suffering from only an accident and I am not at all sorry that I went out yesterday,



THE HON. SELINA FORESTER, AFTERWARD COUNTESS OF BRADFORD

for though I may have caught a touch of catarrh, the visit of five minutes soothed a disturbed spirit.

Cabinet just over. Things look well. The Lord Chancellor's speech last night a success. This was the measure I told you of last year when they were all abusing us for withdrawing a certain Bill.[3] I told you there was no defeat and that it was all arranged. And now, you see, I was right.

I hope I may have a little line—still more, that I may call on you to-morrow at 3.

Your affectionate

D

Skirmishing in the House of Commons had begun, and the Opposition played for time, selecting Disraeli's proud achievement in purchasing the Suez Canal shares as a convenient subject for such tactics:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
February 15th, 1876

I scarcely know where you are—certainly I know nothing how you are. I hope all is well, though I cannot help thinking that they incurred a great responsibility, who permitted you to leave London yesterday.

Yesterday we had hoped, but hardly expected, that we should have got on with our Suez Debate. They asked for delay—not without some show of reason—though the arguments for the plea were quite insincere. As I had summoned my troops I made some show of resistance, lest they should be discontented by an unnecessary assembling; but it was impossible to resist it without a division which was very much to be avoided. We had a majority of between 40 and 50 in the House which would have been considered as our majority on the Suez question, which ought to be, and will be, double that amount. Besides, had we beaten them, they would have gone on moving adjournments. So the House was up and I had a dull evening at home.

---

[3] The Appellate Jurisdiction Bill.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer did well. This is a dull thing to send to you in Odes Althorpiana,[4] but perhaps it is better than nothing from

Your

D

"This is the week of combats," he wrote on February 21st, "and I am glad that I am more fitted for the struggle than I was four and twenty hours ago." The debate on the purchase of the Suez Canal shares was successfully concluded on that evening:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
February 22nd, 1876

It seems to me a long time since we met and I see no prospect of meeting to-day, for if I call at three you will be out, or getting into your carriage—and I have heavy House of Commons work. Let me, however, know that you are alive and, I hope, well. We got rid of Suez last night, and that is something. The fight to-night will be fiercer and will not end till Thursday. You will be walking out this sunny morn when my messenger arrives, for I have risen late. I shall try to get a walk myself before I go to the field of battle.

---

[4] A reference apparently to the visit which Lady Bradford was paying to Lord and Lady Spencer at their place, Althorp.

Yours ever,

D

House of Commons,
February 23rd, 1876

In the midst of a great debate, I run out for a moment, though Mr. Secretary Cross is to speak next, and I must be by his side. A great struggle, but I think we shall have a majority.

I have not seen any of your friends to-day, as I have been very busy. They sent me from Scotland one of the largest and finest salmon I ever saw. It ought to have been painted, and I sent it to Ida.[5] I hope I may have a line to-morrow and hear that you are all well and amused.

Ever,

D

On February 26th, an important addition was made to Disraeli's portrait gallery:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
February 26th, 1876

Only a hurried line in a hurried day. A Cabinet at noon, an audience at three and endless interviews since. I can just catch the post. After a long talk on many things—nearly an hour—she[6] said "Now, I will show you your picture," and opened the door of an adjoining saloon. There it stood, not quite a full length, but a very large picture in a gorgeous frame with, I suppose, the Crown of an Empress at the top. It stood, as it were, on a colossal easel. So after admiring it, what could I do but say, "I think I may claim, Madam, the privilege of gratitude," and dropped on my knee; and she gave me her hand to kiss which I did three times very rapidly, and she actually gave me a squeeze. Then she said "Shall I send it to Hughenden? I have got a case made for it." But I replied that it would be months before I went to Hughenden and that I wanted to have the pleasure of seeing it now, and suggested that I should ask Mr. Graves to convey it to Whitehall. Its being for a time at Whitehall, I thought, pleased her very much. But she would not hear of Graves and said she would send it herself.

---

[5] Lady Newport, afterwards Countess of Bradford and now the Countess Dowager of Bradford.

[6] The Queen.

Lord and Lady Bradford had gone to Brighton, and Disraeli's letters for the next few days contained as much social as political news. "A little round table yesterday at Clarence House. Our host and hostess, the Princess of Wales, two or three courtiers, and Montagu Corry and his sister! Yes, Alice[7] is to be the new lady in waiting to the Duchess of Edinburgh who saw her yesterday for the first time. I believe the impression was favorable. However it is all settled. What changes! Even in our circle." He mentioned a farewell visit from the Viceroy-designate, Lord Lytton, and from Mr. Rivers Wilson, who was bound for Egypt; and then news of Lady Bradford's own family—

---

[7] Montagu Corry's only surviving sister.

"Dear Ida called on me yesterday with Queenie and Margaret,[8] and left a card with their names on it. Alas! I was not at home." On March 2nd he had favourable news from abroad to tell her:

10 Downing Street,
March 2nd, 1876

You can't expect much from me, but at Brighton even a line from London is an incident. . . .

The news from Turkey is very favorable. I am actually sanguine that the Insurrection will subside: and the news is good from Egypt. Gladstone said, the other day, the Khedive would be bankrupt in three weeks and thought that might lead evidently to bankruptcy of Her Majesty's Government! I fear that he and Mrs. Gladstone will be disappointed—and I shall be surprised if Suez Canal shares and Mr. Cave's mission, do not lead to his salvation; at least he won't have to call his creditors together till Mr. Gladstone's Ministry, and then the catastrophe will be ascribed to that doleful event.

But before he concluded his letter he was writing on society once more, and as was not infrequently the case in such circumstances, he did so with a sharply pointed pen:

I suspect the Chief Justice is meditating a dinner to us all. You have never been his guest. I have—and it is curious to see how badly things can be done. Such a combination of incongruous guests, unsavory dishes, and general want of tact and *savoir vivre* would be curious in a common person; in one so distinguished quite a miracle.

---

[8] Lady Newport's daughters, now Lady Beatrice Pretyman and the Duchess of Buccleugh respectively.

A good division in the House of Commons cheered him wonderfully:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
March 4th, 1876

A capital division last night: I would have bargained for 20. The Opposition were very hopeful and looked mischievous and impudent. It was only 14 last year and now more than doubled. The cheering was wonderful: it recalled old days. We have heard nothing like it for many years. It must have astounded the young members. . . . We had a Cabinet this morning at 12. This is scarcely compatible with getting to bed at 3 o'clock. And this is done to convenience one or two peers who want to go into the country and who never sit up. I shall stop it.

Bismarck said at Berlin the other day to my informant "I go entirely in everything with Mr. Disraeli."

I dine at Germany to-day; but anticipate a sorry banquet.

I hope all goes well.

Your ever affec.

D

But a dull sermon and a dinner not to his taste induced a cynical mood:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
March 5th, 1876

A long, dreary sermon from the Bishop of London which made me bitterly repent I had placed the mitre on his head —in 1868.

Yesterday a most incongruous dinner at the German Embassy: difficult to suppose that anyone could show so utter a want of tact in the selection of his guests. Lord and Lady Derby asked to meet F. Stanley and Lady Constance—and, as if that were not enough, his Under-Secretary Bourke, with whom he had probably been working all the morning, then enters. Monty, who had just left me, re-appeared with the Lady in Waiting to the Duchess of Edinburgh. The only rays of light were the dear Idas, and she told me that the Bradfords had been asked—in short three family parties all jammed together. I sate between Lady Derby and Constance who hate each other and who both, in their time, had confidentially imparted this reciprocity of amiable sentiment to me. The dinner was something unearthly—impossible to conceive where so many dark, hard, dishes could have been collected and what cooks of Pandemonium could have prepared them. I literally touched nothing, which was noticed by our host—but I afterwards heard from dear Ida that she had fared like myself and had elicited from Münster the same remark. She called my attention to the most wondrous dish of salmon, which would have been condemned at Billingsgate as unfit for human food!

A good deal of factious opposition had been got up to the Royal Titles Bill, which was designed to confer upon the Queen the title of Empress of India—sufficient at any rate seriously to disturb some of the Prime Minister's colleagues. But once again Disraeli's judgment was vindicated:

SAINT PETER'S COLLEGE LIBRARY
JERSEY CITY, NEW JERSEY 07306

2 Whitehall Gardens,
March 10th, 1876

I am well satisfied with last night. When a crowded house ends in a dissolving view and the Opposition, when the division is called, don't know what to do; run into holes and corners, rush out of the House, or vote against themselves, a Ministry is safe. I had everything to make me nervous, for I had heard nothing for days but the danger of the situation and that our own men could not be trusted, etc. etc. etc. When I got home from my dinner on Wednesday, I found a box marked "secret," from a colleague on whom I mainly depend counselling "surrender." It rather disturbed my night, I assure you, and I wanted a good one instead of rising with shattered nerves.

This made me alter my tactics and I resolved to open the ball with some remarks which might conciliate the House generally, and re-animate my friends. I think I succeeded because I was told, when I sate down, that certain members on the other side of influence and independence, thought that there ought to be now no division; and the Speaker afterwards told me that Lord Hartington was of that opinion too. But that would not satisfy Mr. Gladstone who was brimful, took the reins in his own hands and, after a speech of vituperative casuistry, imagining every combination which could never happen, fled from his own Motion and left his party in a ditch.

CHAPTER II

March–April 1876

THE ROYAL TITLES BILL

Disraeli's satisfaction at the position of parties in the House of Commons at the beginning of the third Session of his Ministry was justified. But the Opposition were probably less dispirited than he made out. And in any case they had no intention of diminishing their attack. The controversy over the Royal Titles Bill was by no means over; and pending further discussion of it they grasped eagerly at any opportunity that came their way of harassing the Government:

To Lady Bradford

House of Commons,
March 13th, 1876

Your note, per post, has just reached me here: a dove in a tumultuous ark! I have had a hard day and shall have a harder night. I have had to answer the most difficult questions that were ever put to a Minister; but they are answered—and then came "Big Ben"[1] with his crack Motion that was to destroy Hunt and the Government, that all naval disasters were to be attributed to the chief of the

---

[1] Mr. G. W. P. Bentinck, M.P. for West Norfolk.

Admiralty being a civilian. As poor Hunt, reduced already by his sorrows and scrapes to 25 stone, had to move the Navy Estimates this evening, I, out of charity, said I would answer Bentinck for him, and we have just divided—something like this!

236
to
16

Bentinck's face was worth seeing—the countenance of a gorilla first brought into contact with a man!

Gladstone is quite mad and I have no doubt that by next Thursday he will have prepared blowing-up materials equal to Guy Fawkes. I understand it is to be something dreadful, but my friends are firm and Harry Chaplin is going to give us a speech out of love for me and hatred of G.

I thought yesterday[2] was amusing. It was fantastic; a banquet in a stable yard and yet full of fun. The Master of the Horse should have been at home in the Mews.

I see nothing but immense labor before me, but I suppose it will end, and then the Opposition will go into the country—and remain. I have no fear; you have. You never believe in me, nor Anne; you believe in newspapers. Bradford rather does.

Your affectionate

D

Interest for the next few days centred in the Royal Titles Bill, and Disraeli kept Lady Bradford informed of developments as they arose:

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[2] A dinner at Lord George Paget's in town.

2 Whitehall Gardens,
March 20th, 1876

There is a great stir about the Committee on the Titles Bill to-night and fighting is expected under some disadvantages to us, as our men are greatly at Sessions. I have had to have an interview with Harty-Tarty here—but don't know that much good will come of it. I should like to write later, but the chances are that I shall not have the opportunity, so it is better to send these meagre lines.

I was grateful to you for yours. I took my farewell of Anne yesterday afternoon, and doubt not she departed. I dined at home, not really having animal spirits for the herd.

Ponsonby came up to me from the Faery at 6 o'clock. Somebody has been frightening her; I think the Marchioness of Lorne. That is, however, a mere conjecture. I found out that it was Biddulph, who is a Whig, who put Torrington up to his tricks.

I called on Susan,[3] who was stupid and uninteresting. I do not say that because she had not asked me to dinner. That is not a stupid, nor an uninteresting act, only an ungrateful one,

Your affec.

D

2 Whitehall Gardens,
March 21st, 1876

It was fortunate that I sent you yesterday some early lines, for after I had written them I had not a moment's rest till midnight.

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[3] Lady Wharncliffe.

My interview with Harty-Tarty was satisfactory, though of course he could not answer for Gladstone who gave us as much trouble as he could, being all the night in one of his white rages and glancing looks at me, which would have annihilated any man who had not a good majority and a determination to use it.

Never was such a triumphant evening. I carried the Bill through Committee without a single amendment, though many were tried and more threatened. This is a most unusual feat. When a Bill is carried through Committee without amendments, there is no "Report" as it is termed—that is to say a stage when all the old objections may be revived and repeated again, and you go to the third Reading and passing it, on the next stage, which we shall do on Thursday. I don't think there will be any attempt at a division then, and so I believe it will after all pass unanimously.

The Faery, I forgot to tell you, had asked me down on Sunday; but as it snowed all night she telegraphed I was not to come and she would send up Ponsonby to see me. This was a relief. The severe weather and some anxieties have not done me any good; but my medico thinks it quite marvellous that, in this year of six winters, I am so well.

He waxed sarcastic about some gossip which Lady Bradford had retailed to him:

I had not heard of Wharncliffe's Irish Viceroyalty. When you wrote about him last you informed me he was going to India. I don't think they themselves imagine they are going to Ireland, or they would have asked me to meet you at dinner on Sunday next. They have not—the wretches!

But his mind was full of the Titles Bill and before concluding his letter he returned to it:

> I look upon the Titles Bill to have proved more than anything the strength of the Ministry. I see no rocks ahead now and am going down to the House for the first time this Session without that tension of the nervous system which I have had since Parliament met. Never was a Government so unfortunate as we were during the recess, and yet we have extricated ourselves out of all our mischances.

In a letter to Lady Chesterfield on March 22nd, he dismissed the pretensions of the Opposition with an even more sweeping gesture:

> All the hopes and schemes of the Opposition have now failed; Suez Canal, Slave Circular, Vanguard Minute, and Royal Titles. I begin to feel as if it were the end of the Session; but I suppose the fires may yet burst out again. March is too early for despair—even for the desperate.

There was one person, however, who had viewed with fiery indignation the circumstances attending the discussion of the Royal Titles Bill:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
March 23rd, 1876

How are you? I hardly saw you yesterday. The Faery has asked me to come down on Saturday; but I shall propose to go down to the Council on Friday which will do instead. She wrote me last night a most impassioned letter as to the conduct of the Opposition—"personal" to herself; she will "resent" it, etc. etc. Her box came while we were at dinner. Mongelas tried to look into it and said "Have you no rest even at dinner?" But he could not draw me as to my correspondent. If he had, he would have sent a telegram to Vienna.

I have little hope of seeing you to-day, but shall try late if the Titles Bill goes off by 6 o'clock as it may. Excuse this rough line; I am writing and talking at the same time and I am scarcely Julius Cæsar—though

Your devoted

D

The end-of-the-Session feeling of which Disraeli had boasted in his letter to Lady Chesterfield soon vanished:

To Lady Chesterfield

2 Whitehall Gardens,
March 25th, 1876

I am very busy and very tired, but I must write you a line. We have had a Cabinet of three hours. The enemy are very busy and will fight on, and hard; but I think I shall vanquish them. I must thank you for all the good and beautiful things you sent me. The flowers were exquisite, or rather are so, for they make my house brilliant and sweet at this moment and I write with violets on each side of me.

Yesterday, though Friday, I dined at No. 43 and sate on Selina's left hand, the Duke of Cambridge on her right. An agreeable party, at least it seemed so to me—Lady Mayo, whom I took down to dinner, sate on my left. She has grown very fat and coarse. Lady Waldegrave was there, who told me a great many State secrets of Whig-craft. I was amused.

Yesterday I went down to Windsor to take my farewell of the Queen.[4] She asked me to stay to-day, &c., but kindly allowed my audience to take place yesterday. It was long and interesting. She has been much excited, and is, about the Titles Bill—and I think change of air and scene will suit her.

Dear Darling,
Ever yours,
D

And on March 27th he wrote in great haste to Lady Bradford:

I write you a hurried line, for all the business of the world seems on my shoulders this morn: and that more than naughty Monty writes to say he cannot be up here till 3 o'clock! He was to have been here at 11.

Nevertheless he found time to add an item of social news:

My dinner yesterday amused me though my host had warned me that it was to be a stupid dinner. I might have told you that I never sit next to Lady D. because I go down with the hostess who is as far from our host and Lady D. as the two poles. But after dinner I paid a visit to the Southern Pole, and she was very lively and likes very much having a coronet on her head which she seems every now and then to touch, to be quite sure it is not a dream.[5]

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[4] The Queen was about to visit Germany.

And a few days later he was plying an ironic pen in a description of another dinner party:

> I dined in the evening at the Somers's. The party should have been gay, but I think it was as dull as I ever remember. I had to take out the "false Duessa"[6] and sate between her and my hostess. I found Susan very heavy and rather deaf. I got wearied with mysterious smiles, whispered oracles and affectation cloaking dullness. My hostess is generally genial enough but she seemed mesmerised by C. who seems to me to have grown very prosy and talks axiomatic politics after dinner, which he would not do if he had as much of them as I have in the morning. Lady C. seems to me an uninteresting woman. I can't conceive what induces men to marry such persons. Then there were the Randolph Churchills—he glouring like one possessed of a devil, and quite uncivil when I addressed him rather cordially. . . . In the evening there was a reception which is now a rare performance for me, but in which I distinguished more than one stratum of Society. While I was observing the World, the most impudent person in it—a "Mrs. Harvey of Icklebury"—addressed me. I never was introduced to her, and she once came to my house without an invitation. Now she said—"It is delightful to meet an old friend," and expatiated on her unhappiness in seeing so little of me. I escaped as soon as possible, and this morning she

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[5] The lady here referred to is, apparently, Lady Dorchester whose husband, Dudley Wilmot, had become the 4th Baron Dorchester on the death of his cousin, the 3rd Baron, in December 1875.

[6] Lady Wharncliffe.

has asked me to dinner with her and her daughter next Sunday, *sans façon!!* As Mr. Daly has not yet arrived from Belvoir, Mr. Turnor will have to reply to this impudence.[7]

But there was, in truth, little enough time for social distraction during the days which remained before the Easter recess. Constant vigilance was required to ward off attacks upon the Government. Nor was it in the House of Commons only that danger was to be apprehended. The attitude of the House of Lords towards Disraeli and his projects was unpredictable, and while he felt that he could manage the Commons he was by no means certain that he could control the Upper Chamber. His letters give a vivid impression of the turmoil of his days:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
March 28th, 1876

Rather hard work, for I was not in bed till three—and a Cabinet and a heavy one, at noon just impending. But I must write a line to my dear counsellor. A letter from the Faery in reply to my last words. She will write again the moment she arrives at Cherbourg.

I fear the night looks long and laborious in the House of Commons and that there is no chance of my paying my visit to 43 in the afternoon. Yesterday, at any rate, we squabashed the Plimsoll imposture. When I returned to the House yesterday from seeing you, I found everybody in a fright about that Bogey—Plimsoll. The division has re-animated my ranks and if they will only learn to say Bo to a Goose, the Government will last. As the Chinese say "a hurried despatch," but from your ever faithful

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[7] Letter to Lady Bradford, April 6th, 1876.

D

2 Whitehall Gardens,
March 29th, 1876

Rather a late night, and not a very agreeable one, as I sate for hours in the fear of being in a minority. Gladstone and Bright both there and quite resolved to throw in with the Home Rulers. We had 260 men in town, but we could not flog them up. It is the reaction after many great struggles. They will not believe that on these innocent Tuesdays the most dangerous Motions are often made. Seeing how things were, I did not rise after Bright, which was not necessary as he is not the Leader of the Opposition, who is at Northampton, and so Gladstone could not close the debate and gain the honors of a victory.

Her most devoted,

D

To Lady Chesterfield

10 Downing Street,
March 31st, 1876

I was glad to hear from you, dear darling, though I am living in a fiery furnace. There never was such a factious Opposition. However, the Bill was read for the second time yesterday in the Lords without a division. The great struggle is on Monday, and I hope the faction will be overthrown. The insolence of the Duke of Somerset surpasses belief. I will some day greatly chastise him. When I thought in the autumn that there would be a vacancy in the Cabinet, I recommended the Queen to appoint him! I won't do that again in a hurry.

The weather is delicious; the spring of Ausonian lands. I walked to Selina in the morning and lunched at 43. In my walk, strolling up the shadowy paths of the Green Park and lost in thought, somebody seized my hand which was on my back. I started, and turned round—and it was Selina!

Good-bye, dear darling,

D

2 Whitehall Gardens,
April 2nd, 1876

Dear Darling,

To-morrow is the great battle of Armageddon when it will be decided who governs England, I or the newspapers. So far as I can judge my friends will rally well. I believe they have made Howe all right, but Frederick Walpole, M.P. for N. Norfolk, died suddenly last night and so we lose dear Orford's vote. He took his seat on Friday merely to support his old friend—and now I have just got a note from him with the sad news; "he regrets alike the cause and the effect."

Pray keep up your courage and don't be frightened by the *Times* and all the rest. I think the Duke of Buccleugh rather silenced the *Times*. It has been rather subdued and chap-fallen since. Some want us, if we have a good majority, to give up the title "Empress." They are the same people who wanted us, after the Slavery division, to give up our Circular and "prevent agitation." I would not; it would have been an act of weakness not of conciliation. And now, whoever hears a word about the "Circular"? Perfectly dead. If you want to govern the world you must know how to say Bo to a goose. And what is the use of Power if you don't make people do what they don't like?

Your affect.

D

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
April 3rd, 1876

A letter from Anne—very low. I fear the newspapers will make her ill. Poor darling! She does not understand that, particularly as far as the *Times* is concerned, it is a question who shall rule the country: the Queen's Minister or Printing House Square. I think it will be the Queen's Minister. I hope you are not as bad as Anne—not quite I think—but baddish. I always suspect that nobody really has less confidence in me than the person I most confer with. But that does not signify so long as you are charming. My house is full of the most beautiful roses but they don't come from Weston or Bretby; certainly not Gopsall.

Your affectionate

D

To Lady Chesterfield

2 Whitehall Gardens,
April 5th, 1876

It was a good substantial majority, but with decent whipping and energy it might have been much better. There were materials for a majority of 60 almost at hand. Even Cis never voted! To this moment unexplained.

The faction of the Opposition is not at all diminished. The whole week will be faction. I can't fix the days for the holidays. On Thursday they oppose the Budget; on Friday, to annoy the Queen, they bring up the *Mistletoe* business; on Monday they assail again the "Titles Bill." They count on my followers being wearied and scattered. It has been a severe Session, but I have never summoned them without cause and always summoned them to victory.

In the midst of all this strain and anxiety your unceasing kindness charms and consoles me. You make my house beautiful with Bretby flowers and you feed me with delicate cakes. Selina is gone—and for a long time—a great blow. Do not fear that I will give in one jot. I hope I may find everyone as firm. Adieu! dear darling.

Your affect.

D

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
April 6th, 1876

The well-known and much loved handwriting was very welcome this morning, for the times have been rough since you quitted 43. Harty-Tarty has much disappointed me, for he lends himself to every device of faction—even when they are palpably violent and injudicious. After a council at Lord Granville's on Tuesday, Gladstone present, they resolved to take up Fawcett who was to move an Address to the Crown before the Proclamation[8] could be issued, and they wished me to pledge myself that no Proclamation should be issued until the Address had been moved in the House of Commons. Harty and Co. counted on the Motion coming on after the recess and the country being agitated during the holidays. I would not stand this, and offered Fawcett Monday the 10th, which he pretended gratefully to accept—but I heard last night that there is disorder and some discontent in their camp, and that they will not fight on Monday.

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[8] The Proclamation in connection with the Royal Titles Act.

I think of giving the Commons as long a holiday as the Lords, for they have been much worked these two months. That would be to the 27th. In that, or, indeed, in any, case a Council could easily be held before Parliament reassembles, the Proclamation would be issued and the affair finished. At present the only apparent result of all this faction is that Harty-Tarty has doubled my majority in the House of Commons, and ascertained that I have a majority, which I rather doubted, in the House of Lords.[9]

To-night, Harty and all his crew are going to oppose the increase in the Army and Navy and move a halfpenny income tax instead of a penny. As they only gave notice of this intention late yesterday I think it likely the Government may be beaten, as it is always popular to vote against a tax and we must have many of our men away; some, I daresay, at Belvoir. I don't mean Mr. Cochrane, as I look upon him in opposition. On Friday, they are going to bring the *Mistletoe* affair forward, or on Monday, if Fawcett really retreats. So, you see, I have enough on my shoulders. It is not etiquette to resign if you are beaten on a tax—still it's a disagreeable incident.

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[9] In the House of Lords the Royal Titles Bill was carried by 137 to 91.

To Lady Chesterfield

2 Whitehall Gardens,
April 7th, 1876

Dear Darling,

The Opposition, instead of destroying the Government, got into a series of scrapes yesterday and will not get out of them speedily. A section rebelled against Lord Hartington's alliance with Fawcett, and he was obliged to make an ignominious retreat amid a cloud of confused reasons.

Then, instead of making their great attack on the Budget resolution, after having been defeated in two preliminary skirmishes they took fright, put off the battle till after the holidays and fled.

I have nothing now except the *Mistletoe* business on Monday. That is disagreeable, but not dangerous. I hope to mitigate it for my Royal mistress. I fear it will much distress her.

I wore your lilies at dinner on Wednesday at Lord and Lady Somers's, and all day I eat plovers' eggs and strawberries sent me by a faery whom I greatly love.

Her affect.

D

The *Mistletoe* business was embarrassing owing to the strong feelings which it excited in the Queen:[10]

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[10] See Vol. I, pp. 356, 365.

April 11th, 1876

. . . The Faery has been greatly distressed about the *Mistletoe* business; but it was impossible to prevent its being brought forward and it ended yesterday very well. She cannot understand that Captain Welsh is not merely her servant, but also an officer in the British Navy who receives his pay and appointments from the House of Commons who grant these in the Navy Estimates which depend entirely on their vote. Although you say I spoil her, it has fallen to my lot to tell her these grave truths; but how they will be borne I do not know. Very badly I suspect.

Disraeli, at any rate, was well satisfied with the debate, for he recurred to it in his letter to Lady Bradford the next day—"I think the debate and division on the *Mistletoe* highly satisfactory; the first was mean and the second overwhelming.[11] I have not yet heard from my friend about it, but I can't help thinking, on reflection, she will not be dissatisfied. Had not the papers been produced the result would have been very different." And he looked forward to a brief holiday at Hughenden well pleased with the way in which the opening weeks of the Session had gone:

April 7th, 1876

. . . I hope to get down to Hughenden on Tuesday, where I shall be alone, but not more lonely than I feel here since you and yours have gone. It was no doubt quite visionary—a mere delusion—but Belgravia had become to me a sort of home, a link between me and the domestic principle. Now life seems quite inhuman—nothing to soften or distract it; nothing but Parliaments and Councils and Despatches, without a gentle thought or graceful deed. Alas! There was the daily letter always and the little visit to charm away cares and sometimes to solve difficulties—for in talking to those in whom we can confide the knot often falls to pieces.

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[11] The Debate had taken place on a Motion which was to the effect that as the Admiralty, by granting compensation to the persons injured in the collision, had practically admitted that those who were in charge of the Royal Yacht were to blame, the Government ought to have taken further steps to vindicate public justice. The Motion was defeated by 157 to 65.

And on the 12th he reported his arrival:

I got off yesterday having seen and settled everything with Derby. . . . The sun was shining here in an azure sky when I rose this morning; but before I had finished my toilette the snow was falling! And I suppose, though it is bright enough again—though very cold—that we shall yet be visited by winter, for all the peacocks are screaming. But perhaps it is on account of my return. They seem to me here my only friends. . . .

CHAPTER III

April–May 1876

IRRITABILITY AND ILL-HEALTH

"Snow, snow, snow! Never ceasing snow! A lonely house and never ceasing snow! And no letter from Weston—my solitary joy!" Thus Disraeli in his letter to Lady Bradford on April 13th. And Disraeli hated snow. "That ended my romance," he told Lady Chesterfield referring to the storm, "for frost and snow always bring reality to me and in its hardest and dullest form." He had promised to pay a visit to Prince and Princess Christian at Cumberland Lodge in Windsor Great Park, and had intended making the journey by road. But with snow thick upon the ground he recoiled from the prospect and would gladly have remained at Hughenden. "To-day," he told Lady Chesterfield on April 15th, "I grieve to say I must, somehow or other, find myself at Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Forest, on an Easter visit to their Royal Highnesses, the Christians." He poured out his woes in a letter to Lady Bradford:

April 15th, 1876

It is a spring day again; the birds sing and the peacocks that were screaming all yesterday and perched upon the pergola with their draggled trains, are magnificent again, reposing at full length upon the terrace, or couched in the marble vases glittering white against their purple gorges and their green and golden tails. And in half an hour I shall have to leave them, in no very high spirits I can assure you, for the messenger who has just arrived brings me nothing but cares. I sometimes wish that they were all at the bottom of the Red Sea with the Suez Canal Shares. I really am too old for ambition, and, except that I shall rarely see you again when my reign is over, the loss of my sceptre would not break my heart, I can assure you.

The temper of his letter descriptive of his visit bore witness to the mood of irritable ill-humour into which the thought of leaving Hughenden had thrown him:

To Lady Bradford

Cumberland Lodge,
Windsor Great Park,
April 16th, 1876

Very cold and very unhappy, but I must write you a line—and it is pleasant that there is someone in the world to tell that we are cold and unhappy.

I agree with you about the excellent Christian and always had a favorable impression of him, a shrewd, sagacious man—slow only in manner and with some sense of humor—a good man. He welcomed me and showed me to my room, that I might be in time for a cup of tea when the Princess returned with the Duke of Edinburgh, whom she was to bring from the station. It was the coldest room I ever inhabited—upon a little portable grate there was a spark of glowing coal. "I ordered you a fire," he said, "as the weather was cold."

In an hour's time I went to the tea and your friend, and my hostess said—"I hope you did not find your room cold; it is the coldest room in the house; do you know why it is so cold? It looks to the north." I replied that I did not know the cause; but I felt the effect and hoped to cure it by burning plenty of the old Windsor forest logs. Indeed Mr. Baum took out the little elfin grate, fit only for Robin Goodfellow to warm himself at, and filled the open space with blazing logs, so that when I came to dress the dear aneroid which had counted 50, was ten degrees higher.

The Hardwickes are here and only they. Two or three second rate courtiers from Windsor came over to make the appearance of a dinner. I had to take in to dinner Miss Van de Weyer. I wanted a dinner not having lunched, but I literally could not get a mouthful. I thought I was safe in depending on lamb and poultry. The lamb could only have been killed yesterday and no barn door would have acknowledged the *volaille*. Curiously tough! . . .

April 17th saw him back at Hughenden writing a dissertation on the advantages and disadvantages of insect life, in response to some remarks by Lady Bradford on the subject of dry-rot in the wood at Weston:

Hughenden Manor,
April 17th, 1876

Just arrived. Found your dear letter which supports one in all the cares of life. It was most kind of you to write, as you could not, I fancy, have received mine. . . .

I am very interested about the insect. Do you know that he has appeared in my Dresden Cabinet (in the library) which is full of treasures. Monty found it out when he was here last. I have always told you that the most powerful of organisations are the insects: see how the white ants (Termites) devour fleets and even cities—and locusts devastate provinces. And, of late years, they have been more fatal to the vine than Sir Wilfrid Lawson[1] to its divine produce. But, then, what wonderful benefits these insects confer on man! The bee gives us something as good as sugar without any of its evils, and the worm gives you a robe, though I don't remember ever having seen you in silken attire, but your prettiest prints owe all their lustre to the cochineal. One might go on. Mr. Addison would have written a "Spectator" on this; but I find a messenger waiting me here, and now that he has been fed, beginning to be ferocious.

It seems a long while since I saw you and yours, a long, long while. The Library is very bright to-day; but I am not content because I am alone. I wish, somehow or other, you could all come and stay here a week, sauntering in the sun, and little dinners, and a rubber in the eve—and perhaps a new man every day by train to amuse us when we had expended our resources that way. But I know Bradford will never come, or when he has arranged, will remember the last day that he has got an engagement at Shrewsbury, or he must see some trials at Epsom or Ascot.

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[1] The great advocate of Temperance Legislation in the House of Commons.

I took a walk with Christian yesterday, alone, and it confirmed all my previous favorable impressions. He is a good fellow and his children are well brought up. They are attractive and rather pretty. I cannot endure ugly children.

Will you ever read this nonsense? Do, and write me some yourself—to keep up my spirits. Sometimes I think I shall never see you again, or you will be changed if I do. I believe that is usual. Remember me to B. and remember me also yourself.

Yours ever,

D

His letters at this time were, indeed, characterised by a streak of impish malevolence which was constantly displaying itself in passages of mordant sarcasm—"If you could refer to your letters," he snapped at Lady Bradford, who had taken him to task for not writing to her in London, "you would see I think, that it was impossible to write to you in London, as every letter seemed to announce that you were returning to Weston the day it was written." On April 24th he returned to London himself and found General Ponsonby awaiting him with news from Windsor—"The King of Hanover proposed to pay a visit to England and its Queen on the 3rd May about the time that the Empress of Germany arrives! I have got to write immediately to the Duke of Cambridge, who is at Paris, to prevent this contretemps." Besides sending General Ponsonby to see him the Queen had also written:

To Lady Bradford

April 24th, 1876

A most charming letter from the Prince of Wales from Gibraltar. But the most extraordinary letter is from the Faery which you must see when you come to town. It is too great a document to send being 12 pages! Baden was charming, quite delightful; too many relations at Coburg which prevented her writing to me. She got my last letter as she was getting into her departure carriage at Coburg and was so distressed that I seemed annoyed about the *Mistletoe* and all that; she sent me the telegram from Cherbourg to reassure me. Monty has returned. Lady Charlotte[2] seems quite mad. I always thought her so, or should have done had she not been your friend. When do you come to town? I go to-morrow to Windsor. Will you know me when we meet—if, indeed, we ever meet again? How very strange you never mention coming back.

Echoes of the unfortunate controversy over the collision in which the royal yacht had been involved were, indeed, a long time dying. "I suppose by this time my royal mistress is at Windsor," Disraeli had written two days earlier. "She was terribly overcome by the *Mistletoe* affair, and I expected to be imprisoned at Hampton Court, or perhaps be turned out altogether." Nevertheless the visit to Windsor passed off, as usual, happily:

April 25th, 1876

I have just returned from Windsor. As I went in a special train and did not much care to be alone in a saloon carriage, like a wild beast in the *Jardin des Plantes,* I took Monty with me, who had never been to Windsor Castle; and while I was an hour with the Faery, Ponsonby in the most good-natured manner lionised him over every part of the Castle. . . .

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[2] Lady C. Lister, an aunt of Monty Corry.

I am much pressed with affairs as, Derby being in attendance on the dying bedside of his mother, I have to receive the Ambassadors, and there is a great deal to receive them about. . . . I have got to go down to the House of Commons now to finish Fawcett—at least I hope so.

It soon became clear that Disraeli had derived little benefit from his short holiday. He was himself conscious of disappointment. "This life does not suit me, which I thought it would," he had written from Hughenden on April 21st. "The mornings are full of affairs, every hour becoming more interesting and urgent; but the evenings are terrible. I counted on reading to occupy them, but my mind is too exhausted to read." And on his return to London he felt lonely and depressed. "The letter S. I suppose exists," he wrote to Lady Chesterfield on April 30th, "but it is no longer a letter in my alphabet. Bradford is here and has been for days; but she does not return—nor does she wish." And from being merely cynical his letters tended to become querulous:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
April 26th, 1876

You seem a little angry with me, though I am sure I don't know what I have done except to sigh a little, which is very natural, that we are so long separated. . . . I try to write to you every day a few incoherent lines—but I am greatly pressed. This inconvenient dying of the Dowager of Derby at this moment is sad. I have not seen the Secretary of F.O. yet! And so much going on—and the French Ambassador coming to me at half past 12!

It is also most injurious to the party. I quite counted on a series of Foreign Office receptions. With forty years of political experience, I never knew a party so deserted by all social influences as ours. I wonder how they are kept together—not a solitary dinner or a single drum! If it were not for the mysterious letting of her house by my friend Lady Waldegrave, I think we must fall to pieces. It seems to me we have not a woman with the slightest ambition. All female movement seems to have died out with poor Lady Carnarvon. What is the use of the fine house of the Lonsdales? They might try something. It would not be fashionable; but it might be grand.

He added in a postscript:

A telegram just come in from Madrid. The King of Spain will dine at H.M. Legation to meet the Prince of Wales. There is no precedent for a King of Spain accepting an invitation to dinner! Some now think it is really all up with Spain.

2 Whitehall Gardens,
April 27th, 1876

Your letter is not very cheery; but your handwriting is something. It appears to me that I am quite alone in this world. . . . I could not telegraph about C. for I only knew it by the paper this morning. It is an annoyance rather than a disappointment. Almost all the deaths since the General Election have been on my side. The stars in their courses have fought against Sisera. . . . To-morrow, although there is an Edinburgh Levee I must go to Windsor —a Council to pass *the* Proclamation. She expressed a wish that I should come "to be on her right hand on such an occasion." I don't know how long I shall remain on her right hand, nor do I much care. Life seems very dark, you continually away and the future prospects so doubtful and unsatisfactory. The Academy Dinner on Saturday weighs on my spirits. I thought Bradford always went to it? I have a good mind not to go; but then there would be a row.

2 Whitehall Gardens,
April 29th, 1876

I could not write yesterday, as it was an urgent and anxious day. That wretched Fawcett having given notice, on Monday night, though rather at 2 o'clock on Tuesday morning, that at the meeting of the House on going into supply, he would bring forward a vote of censure on the Government. . . .

I have had a heavy Cabinet to-day and many toilsome affairs and can scarcely write this, and have to go to that most damnable ceremony, the Academy Dinner, where 150 critics of "the first water" expect me to give utterance to Attic sayings when my brain has no Attic salt left in it.

I can't make out when you are going to town, or whether you are coming. Why should you go to Bretby? You have seen enough of Anne and you thought she had seen more than enough of you. If she wanted to see us both more, she should not let her house. The only person whom you seem neither to care to see, nor to please, is myself. And when you come to town it will only, I fear, be to tell me, as you usually do, that you are going again into the country on some visit, or still more probably, even abroad. I fear our Romance is over, if indeed it ever existed except in my imagination—but still I sometimes dreamed that the dream might last until I slumbered for ever.

Yours,

D

2 Whitehall Gardens,
May 2nd, 1876

Affairs are not very agreeable here, as the enemy appear to be anxious to renew the fight on the "Proclamation" which is harassing, at this moment especially, of the visit of the Empress of Germany and the return of the Prince of Wales. To-night there will be a guerilla move in the Commons and a more important reconnaissance in the Lords; but there is some chance that the answer in our House and the full reply of the Lord Chancellor may check the hostile advance, and if checked it may die for the world is anxious, I rather feel, for a new subject. If the sun would only shine and put the world in a better humor we might have a chance; but gentlemen begin to despair of getting their rents. The farmers are really sulky and vent their spite not on Nature, but the Ministry. In the House of Commons last night a round robin was in secret circulation among the Liberal party requesting a meeting of the party to consider the Royal Proclamation and do something. They are discontented with their chiefs, and Harcourt and Henry James and Fawcett want to force Harty-Tarty's hand. . . .

The Queen sent for Lieutenant Cameron to Windsor and I took him there last Friday, and she gave him the C.B. herself. He is a simple sailor, not ill-looking, but short. He behaved very well, for when H.M. (said) he must have endured a great deal in the 2 years and 8 months when he crossed the whole of Africa and never saw a European, he said, "Yes, Madam, but this great honor of seeing my Sovereign rewards me for all my sufferings." Pretty well. He dined also at the Academy dinner with his decoration! What a change in a man's life. Three years ago, unknown, humble, obscure—and now the companion of Sovereign and the flower of the world. The Academy dinner was an hour shorter in consequence of F. Grant's health and, therefore, was much improved.

Ever,

D.

On May 3rd it was still doubtful whether the Opposition would fight the Proclamation. "What happened quite unexpectedly in the House of Commons later in the evening," Disraeli wrote on that day, referring to the debate on May 2nd, "will not help them; for one of those occasions which rarely, and yet in a sense always, come to the vigilant, came to me and I smashed that wretched Lowe whom I believe you much admire." Lowe had, in fact, got himself into an awkward difficulty. In a speech at Retford he had declared that two previous Prime Ministers had refused to have anything to do with a change in the Queen's title; but that now a more "pliant" person having been found, the change would doubtless be made. Challenged in the House of Commons by Mr. Charles Lewis for his authority for the statement that two previous Prime Ministers had refused to agree to a change of title, Lowe at first tried to evade the issue and then stated rather weakly—"I shall answer none of the Honourable and Learned gentleman's questions." Disraeli had seized the opening thus providentially given him. The statements made by Lowe, he declared, "were monstrous if they were true"—since he must have violated his oath as a Privy Councillor in making public matters which were strictly confidential between the Sovereign and her constitutional advisers—but if they were not true then they must be described "by an epithet which I cannot find in my vocabulary." He then exploded his bomb. He had the particular authority of the Queen, he declared, for saying that no such proposals had, in fact, ever been made to a previous Prime Minister. Disraeli's vindication was complete—"Lowe appeared in a white sheet last night," he wrote on the 5th, "holding a taper of repentance. He was abject." The contretemps did not, however, deter the Opposition. "Sir Henry James gave notice of their Motion and next Thursday the battle commences. They say I may expect a great victory; but I am tired and sad. The Session has been one of extraordinary anxiety and exhaustion and the burthen has fallen on myself—and generally without that happiness of private life which soothes and sustains."

The Academy Banquet went off successfully though Disraeli appears to have taken greater interest in the æsthetic than in the political aspect of the occasion—which, after all, was as it should be:

To Lady Bradford

May 3rd, 1876

After dinner I looked about a little with some expert who could show me what I wanted. A picture of Leighton of great size—a Theban procession to the groves of Daphne in honor of Apollo—very fine in conception and execution; very original—all the women and girls singing with their mouths all open—and yet life and reality and no monotony of expression; all the details apparently exquisitely accurate, full of genius. But amid the surrounding glare I am incapable of forming any good opinion of its merits as to color and all that on which pictures ultimately depend. The Hall of Agrippa by Alma Tadema perfection! And a very clever Atalanta by Poynder. These are really all I saw except Judith by Herbert—a girl of Syrian beauty—very fine and totally unlike all those slayers of Holofernes with a human head in one hand and a scimitar in the other which frighten me so much, by Allori and Co. I have always thought Holofernes was somewhat ill-used, rather a case of Colonel Val. Baker.

The political situation both at home and abroad was such as to demand frequent consultation between the Queen and her Prime Minister:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
May 4th, 1876

The Faery kept me late, and I could not have reached you till your consecrated hours when I am always in the way.

This was a greater disappointment, as yesterday, it seemed to me, I scarcely saw you and never heard you which I doubt not was my fault, but is not less my sorrow. I am now going to the field of action and if they knew how little inclined I was to fight, I think they would win; but fortunately that's a secret.

The telegrams from Constantinople this morning are most alarming. The Duke of Edinburgh ought to be in those waters at this critical moment—but his ship is not ready! The *Sultan.* If we don't take care, he will be the only Sultan there when he arrives.

The Faery thinks that instead of going to the Opera, somebody should have dined with her to-day. And I think it might as well been so. As a punishment he has to go to the drawing-room to-morrow, which he had intended to escape. *All this very private.*

Yours ever,

D

"In a couple of hours I go to Windsor," he wrote on Sunday, May 7th; and on Monday he gave Lady Bradford an account of his visit:

House of Commons,
May 8th, 1876

. . . My visit to Windsor was agreeable. The two Empresses sate next to each other at dinner: a very small circle, only the immediate attendants. Carnarvon sate next to the Empress of Germany, and I sate next to the Empress of India. The conversation of the *partie carée* was good: animated and natural—but whenever Augoosta had got involved in some metaphysical speculations with Carnarvon, the Faery took refuge in confidential whispers in which she indulged in the freest remarks on men and things, especially with reference to the late, and still impending, events. After dinner I was attached to Augoosta who threw out all her resources, philosophical, poetic, political—till the Faery was a little jeal., for she had originally told Lady Ely that some one "was not to make his pretty speeches to Augoosta, who only wanted to *draw him to her!!!!*" However, all went off very well, and the Faery made a happy dart and had the last word.

Unfortunately, I had been previously engaged to lunch at the German Embassy and meet Augoosta this morning—which I did at 2 o'clock and stayed an hour. I sate next to Augoosta who was returning to Windsor and probably will tell. . . .

Yours ever,

D

In the House of Commons the Government continued to prosper:

To Lady Bradford

May 12th, 1876

Yesterday, as Cromwell said of the Battle of Worcester, was "a crowning mercy." Such a discomfiture has rarely been experienced by a party.[3] And what is most delightful is that the members were almost all our own. I don't think a Whig voted for us. The speech of Kenealy which will be read by every rough in Britain and which was well delivered, was apropos—Peel spoke some time and with great effect—without a thought or an argument. Such were the magic of a great name and a splendid voice! I rose past midnight with a racking headache and ought to have disgraced myself, but did not.

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[3] The occasion was the vote of censure moved on the Government by Sir H. James, in connection with the Proclamation under the Royal Titles Act. The Government had a majority of 108.

And on the 18th he wrote Lady Chesterfield—"Our majorities seem to increase every day—and all goes well except my health." Unseasonable weather and overwork had, in fact, brought on one of the attacks to which he was becoming increasingly liable. "I could not call yesterday," he told Lady Bradford on May 16th, "and was very unwell with my throat . . . I sate through the debate in great suffering, scarcely mitigated by our triumphant majority." And on the 17th—"I can only send you a hurried line; just going off—and only just up, though I retired at ten last night. All this seclusion, however, has not cured me, and I have ordered my medico to meet me here on my return from Windsor. The Faery is much agitated about public affairs, but hearing I was not well, proposed that I should come to her on Friday. The chances are that I shall not be better then, and see her I must. So I go." The Queen became anxious and made constant enquiries:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
May 18th, 1876

The medico said I had a feverish catarrh—the old story—and the remedies have already done me some good so far as the fever is concerned; but I am dreadfully weak and out of cue. . . . The Faery keeps telegraphing for bulletins, with injunctions to see Jenner who is going down to Windsor, and he will tell her exactly how I am, etc. etc. "She is very anxious"—all this . . . varied with cyphered telegrams about Berlin and Bismarck and fears about the presence of the King of Hanover.

I ought to be content, perhaps, that my attack did not occur a month ago. It might then have been serious, and I am glad also that I got over my Cabinet on Tuesday. What silly stuff! and what a handwriting!—but it comes from one who admires you though his head and hand are feeble.

D

On the 19th he wrote that he would go neither to the city nor to the House of Commons, but that he thought that he ought to drive a little lest he became a confirmed invalid. "It is so long since I have been at No. 43 that I should like to know whether I might call there to-day? And at what time? Would six do, or have you 1,000 engagements at that time? Probably." On the 20th he was a little better—"He has had a good night and coughing much reduced. Flying words still keep coming from the Faery on all possible subjects; the great question now whether King George[4] may wear the British uniform!" But his weakness was not easily thrown off:

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[4] King of Hanover.

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
May 25th, 1876

Your letter gladdened my heart. I can make you no adequate return, for of all the duties and occupations which devolve on me letter-writing is that for which the sort of attack I am now suffering from most empties me. One can read—and one can listen, and judge, and talk, but writing requires a degree of energy and precision of which I am now quite incapable. I am out of all pain this morning and should have publicly appeared—and may even yet—but the north-east blast has returned and this is my direst foe.

At twelve o'clock this morning came the Duke of Edinburgh to make his farewell visit. He goes to-day; a little nervous and perplexed at the state of affairs—and with cause! He may have to make war on his father-in-law in his great ship the *Sultan*. I promised, if I saw things looked very black, to confer confidentially with the Prince of Wales and get his wife and children back directly. We shall have 12 ironclads in Turkish waters very shortly and a due equipment of smaller vessels.

Accept with kindness this feeble and listless scrawl. I could only write to you.

Yours ever,
D

I was obliged to hold the Cabinet yesterday under this roof.

2 Whitehall Gardens,
May 26th, 1876

I can't give a good account of myself, as I had a fresh attack last night—so I have been on the sofa all day in the hope that we may baffle it. And I think we may, so far at least as my being able to receive my guests to-morrow. And after that—the deluge.

The Cork election is a charming eccentricity. I think we shall see a great breakdown of all existing political organisations in Ireland, and this (which is the second Southern seat won since the General Election) will not be the last of which we shall despoil the once irresistible enemy.

But all sinks into insignificance compared with the real politics which are now agitating Europe and Asia. So far as I can judge, the attitude of England is appreciated and highly considered. All I wish is to be well; but perhaps I shall be that when I see you.

D

To Lady Chesterfield

10 Downing Street,
May 29th, 1876

I was disappointed in not writing to you yesterday; but it was a day of great business and nobody was idle. Whatever happens we shall certainly not *drift* into war, but *go* to war—if we do—because we intend it and have a purpose which we mean to accomplish. I hope, however, Russia at the bottom of the whole affair will be sensible and then we shall have peace. . . . This delicious day, the only one we have had this year, has done me a great deal of good. I fear, however, there will be no holidays for me and that I shall not be able to get home.

10 Downing Street,
May 30th, 1876

A hurried line to tell you the Sultan is deposed; but without violence, and his nephew Murad Effendi reigns in his stead. All is tranquil at Constantinople and among the population generally, and especially among the Mussulmans, the greatest enthusiasm prevails. This event is in favor of English influence and interests.

Sorry to say the Prince of Wales is very unwell. He will go to Sandringham to nurse a bit. He has postponed his dinner at the Foreign Office from the 10th to the 24th. It will be a great disappointment to assembled England at the Derby to-morrow.

Yours ever,

D

CHAPTER IV

June–August 1876

HIGH POLITICS

When Disraeli told Lady Chesterfield that he feared he would not be able to get home for Whitsuntide, he was unduly pessimistic; for a few days later he was writing to her from Hughenden. Thus on June 6th—"I have only time to write you a single line. We have fine weather here, showers at night, sun in the day. . . . The greatest showers have been telegrams which arrive every moment." There was exciting news from Turkey which he at once passed on to Lady Bradford:

Hughenden Manor,
June 6th, 1876

The physician of the Embassy at Constantinople tells Embassy there is no doubt the Sultan committed suicide. An inquest was held on him; 19 medical men present including all the physicians of the Embassies and others of high standing, Turkish, Greek and Armenian. They certified unanimously suicide and that he had opened his veins with a pair of pointed scissors. Dr. Dickson says that neither he, nor any of his colleagues entertained the slightest doubt that the act was voluntary. Since his deposition all arms and cutting instruments had been kept out of his reach; but yesterday morning he asked for a pair of scissors to cut off his beard. A small pair was given him and he turned his attendants out of the room and locked the door.

I can say nothing about affairs, which no one can penetrate at this moment. I will only say that I've not the slightest cause for regret for the course I have taken. It requires calmness which no one I have to deal with possesses in an eminent degree except Derby, who takes things coolly enough; but I am not sure of his firmness as of his salutary apathy. However, I think we shall do and that Prince Gortchakoff has found out by this time that he is not always to have his own way.

This is a random scribblement, but I have two messengers waiting in the house at this moment; one of them must go by half past 3 and he must take this or you will not have it to-morrow. I hope that Bradford and all are well, and I am

Ever yours,

D

To this political news he added an interesting note on the subject of cedar trees in England:

There are no "cedars many hundred years old" in England. The tree grows quickly and soon looks venerable; but it is a modern introduction—I mean comparatively. Mr. Evelyn introduced the cedar into England and gave the first plant he raised to his friend, King Charles 2nd. That was barely 200 years ago and it was some time before they spread into the interior of England. He gave presents in time to his friends about London and you will find the oldest cedars about Roehampton and Putney, and so on. The cedars at Hampden, which the lying gardener tells you were planted by the great Hampden, are only 120 years old; probably about the date of those at Warwick.

Even before the reassembling of Parliament the pressure of work became very great, and for some days Disraeli was able to write only occasionally to his friends. Such letters as he found time for give a vivid idea of the whirl in which he lived:

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
June 7th, 1876

Your welcome handwriting! I sent you a rapid scratch yesterday—and directed right, as you must have got it at Leamington this morn.

We have not had much leisure here, for telegrams from all parts of the globe are showered on us; but one can bear it when things go well. I like the look of things and should not be surprised if I accomplished exactly, and entirely, all I intended. That ought to satisfy a man. But the stakes are high. Generally speaking there is no gambling like politics—but when you have to deal only with Emperors and High Chancellors and Empires are on the main, the excitement, I suppose, a little increases.

I shall have great pleasure in dining with you on Sunday; but I shall make, I hope, my usual call in the morn. Probably, from what you say, I shall not see you till then and, probably, from what you say, a new absence is to begin on the following Monday. I do not at all mind a bad dinner, because I make it a rule never to eat it.

Breathe nothing to any human being of my general feeling as to affairs; you must be more than discreet. The Faery is much touched about the suicide. "He was my guest and Sir H. Elliott said, always asked after me." This latter trait she has repeated. Characteristic!

Yours ever,

D

To Lady Chesterfield

2 Whitehall Gardens,
June 11th, 1876

Dear Darling,

Affairs have been, and are, very critical; but I think they will all end well—certainly to the credit of Her Majesty's Ministers. The three Powers have withdrawn their obnoxious Note and having been wise enough to do that, I trust they will not be so foolish as to hesitate to do more. Your friend Schouvaloff is very excited and seems anxious to maintain peace.

I dined on Friday at Ferdinand de Rothschild's who has just put up the most beautiful marble staircase in London. The Duchess of Beaufort who dined there, told me it cost £20,000. The dinner was given to the Duke of Connaught who, I thought, looked somewhat like a bridegroom; perhaps practising. There was a Ball after dinner of *crème de la crème:* only 100 persons asked, all of them fit to dance with the Duke of Connaught. I got away, but I saw Lady Howe there who told me she had just left you and wonderfully well, which made me glad.

Yours affect.

D

To Lady Bradford

House of Commons,
June 13th, 1876

I have just come into the morning sitting about an hour before it ceases and find, as I had hoped, we have done a good day's work and carried another of our principal Bills through the ordeal of Committee[1]—and, last night, we carried the second readings of two other important measures.[2] This with the considerable success in the despatch of business during the last week, has most unexpectedly advanced the Session. The Education Bill which commences on Thursday will take, more or less, a month; but this is the only heavy business which remains. I hope, therefore, our domestic reputation at the end of July will be equal to our foreign.

The great man at Berlin has completely realised my expectations. He is in the highest spirits and good humor. He delights in the whole affair, and particularly praised "Disraeli's speeches," to Odo Russell, and "his sending the fleet to the Dardanelles!" And then he fell into a fit of laughing at Gortchakoff; but I think I must tell you to burn this letter—at any rate I will stop my pen.

Schouvaloff was with Lord Derby yesterday, as I had arranged—and they had a very interesting conversation. I think things look as well as possible; but we must be prepared yet for strange vicissitudes and trials of our mettle. So much the better! These are politics worth managing.

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[1] The Poor Law Amendment Bill.

[2] The Appellate Jurisdiction Bill, from the House of Lords, and the University of Oxford Bill.

I can send you nothing interesting and amusing, and you don't want it. You are interested and amused following your natural tastes and fancies and surrounded by a number of people who suit you. Here, the sky is dark and the town seems as empty as if it were the Derby. Nor is there a single person, I should think, to give me a cup of tea. The little Duchess who wrote to me and promised me one, as she was too superior a being to go to Ascot, I find has fled there. I conclude, therefore, her philosophy arose from not having been asked to New Lodge (what a name!) and that she has been subsequently invited there.

I have just got a telegram that the Emperor of Germany left Berlin to-day for Ems and that Bismarck leaves it to-morrow for Kissingen. I have to dine at home and be at the evening sitting precisely at nine o'clock. This is disgusting—but unless I do it and engage to keep a house for the independent members at night, they will not give me up their mornings. Unreasonable wretches!

Yours ever,

D

To Lady Chesterfield

10 Downing Street,
June 20th, 1876

There is no news: all is suspense in the East. The great Powers have agreed that the new Sultan shall not be unduly pressed, but shall have the opportunity of negotiating with his Feudatories and insurgent subjects, who, I believe, are chiefly foreigners.

I dine to-day with the Princes of Wales: a banquet in honor of the unfortunate Salar Jung who, I believe after all, will only appear in a wheeled chair.

I am pretty well, though I have more to do than generally falls to the lot of mortals. However, it is interesting and after rates and taxes and shipping Bills, *la haute politique* is refreshing: worth living for. I have little else to live for unhappily.

I fear you will scold me for this letter, which is too short for your tariff. Nevertheless, it shows you I am thinking of you and that is something.

Adieu!

D

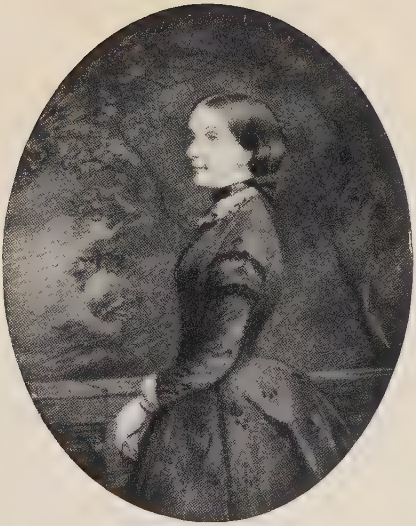
In the midst of all this feverish activity Disraeli was assailed by another sharp, though happily brief, illness:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
July 3rd, 1876

I could not write yesterday—being so very ill and quite incapable of thought or expression. What irritates me is that Gull, who has now been tinkering me for a week and making a series of conceited mistakes—ordering me, for example, to drink port wine which I have not done for ten years, and which has nearly killed me—keeps telling Monty that I am better, who tells of course the same to you and the Queen although I warn him to the reverse—but, as he very plausibly contends, he is bound to report what Gull says.

Yesterday I drove out for an hour—to try to accustom oneself to life again; but the port wine regimen afterwards



ANNE, COUNTESS OF CHESTERFIELD

From a miniature

brought things to a crisis and I really thought, and not for the first time, that it was all over. It would do me a great deal of good if I could call on you to-day—and I wish you would let me know when I can come.

Yours ever,

D

2 Whitehall Gardens,
July 4th, 1876

You never told me yesterday the programme of your day: so I know not what happened to you: where you dined, where you danced and all that.

I had a very hard night and did not retire till three o'clock in the morning. Too hard a life for me now—and there is a prospect of a month of it! It was, however, softened by colossal majorities on a most important measure and on which, a fortnight ago, I was told Government was to be defeated. From what I can make out, the Turks have repulsed both the Servians and Montenegrins. This will be rare, if true.

I forgot to tell you that on Sunday night I found a letter from the Faery on my table, saying—"I have made the acquaintance of Miss Corry and find her very ladylike and with pleasing manners."

Yours ever,

D

"I have no telegrams from the seat of war this morning," he wrote on the 5th. " . . . I shall try and call a little before 3 o'clock in the hope of seeing you—even if it be only getting into your eternal carriage." And on the 6th—

"I suppose you were very late last night. . . . After you left I occupied your chair at Princess Louise's request. She was touched by my coming to Kensington personally to enquire after her beautiful eyes which don't seem to have recovered. I was touched more by the awkward consciousness that I had never asked her to dinner! I shall take my chance of seeing you to-day on my way to business—but I dare say I shall fail."

To Lady Chesterfield he wrote on the 7th—"I don't know when I wrote to you last; too long ago, but I am so much absorbed by the present state of affairs that correspondence is impossible, even almost with you—though I often think of you. . . . The Faery is a little unhappy that she never sees me, so I go down to her to-morrow morning." Two days later he found time to write more fully:

To Lady Chesterfield

2 Whitehall Gardens,
July 9th, 1876

Dear Darling,

We have an English Summer and that is a great blessing. It is long since one's blood was warmed with the continual calorie of many weeks. It does not, however, suit the Faery who complains terribly of the sweltering clime of the realms she rules.

I went down to her yesterday for an audience at four o'clock; in an Express Train that was obliged to return at 5 minutes past 5, or I should have run the risk of being smashed. The Queen was punctual to the moment, and so I thought all was right. But after our business was transacted we talked so long and so agreeably that the clock in the Closet struck 5!! What was I to do? Had it only been missing a train, I would have remained and taken my chance—But a special! and the possibility of being smashed! I was obliged to jump up and tell the truth. "Run away, run away directly," she said with many smiles—and so at an audience instead of being dismissed, I dismissed my Sovereign!

When I came home, I called on the Duchess of Manchester to congratulate her on her daughter's impending marriage with the Earl of Gosford; she is a nice girl: handsome and unaffected without, apparently, being *"fast."*

. . . From the news that reached me last night and this morning, my opinion decidedly is that the Turks have been victorious in every engagement, and I am sanguine enough to believe that before the month terminates the infamous invasion of the Servians will have been properly punished. All the great Powers, Russia included, seem anxious to defer to England and something like the old days of our authority appear to have returned.

Your truly affectionate,

D

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
July 13th, 1876

I shall try to see you about three and may perhaps catch you for ten minutes. There is no news from the seat of war to-day, but as the Emperors have now entirely adopted our policy of non-interference and neutrality, I am in great hope that the Insurrection may be soon subdued and some tolerable settlement brought about.

The Faery telegraphs this morning about the continued "horrors" reported in the *Daily News* of to-day. They appear in that journal alone, which is the real Opposition journal, and I believe are, to a great degree, inventions. But their object is to create a cry against the Government.

Yours ever,

D

During the remainder of July Disraeli was much occupied in the House of Commons with the Education Bill, and outside its walls with a number of social engagements. "Parliament will not be up, I fear, before the 12th of August," he told Lady Chesterfield on July 21st. "There was a very fine Ball at Marlboro' House last night. Your friend the Duchess of Moudry was there in a wondrous dress. The Ball was given in honor of the King and Queen of Greece. I took Selina into supper by order of the Prince of Wales. Everybody said she never looked so well and I agreed with everybody." On the 25th, he wrote to Lady Bradford:

House of Commons,
July 25th, 1876

. . . We had a stormy Cabinet yesterday, but it ended halcyon: and a terrible House of Commons which did not rise till 3 o'clock in the morning—but which gave us a triumphant majority. And here we are at it again: a factious struggle at the end of July.

At the Opera yesterday, I heard of "Florence"[3] in a box, with her old nurse or gouvernante, and H.C.[4] at the back of the box! This looks like business. Where was the Duchess? I am so busy I cannot call and enquire. . . .

I have got great fear that I shall have to go to Osborne on Saturday as the Faery wants me very much—but I shall struggle to pay her a later visit.

Yours ever,

D

The next day he mentioned an impending appointment—that of the Duke of Marlborough to the Irish Viceroyalty. "The Prince does not know of the appointment of M. It was mentioned to him as one that was probable so that he might be prepared for the event. In fact there is no one else to appoint, for the wealthy avoid the office and paupers won't fit." He added a few words about Eastern Europe—"The Servians are quite beaten; but our accounts from Constantinople are distressing and critical. The new Sultan is quite mad." London was emptying; but this made little difference to the demands on the Prime Minister's time:

To Lady Bradford

House of Commons,
July 28th, 1876

London a desert! Where are all the carriages—the sparkling barouches and the whirling broughams? Nothing—and nobody except "the million of vulgar." And yet I ought not to quote Topham Beauclerk's *mot,* for I had visits to-day from two Dukes and both of them K.G.'s. 1. of Marlboro'—his first interview on business. There is really nobody else to send—but the matter is to be kept dark to spare Abercorn's feelings, who would not like to revisit his Viceroyalty as a dead horse—and then the Duke of Buccleugh; *p.p.c.* merely friendly chat consisting of asking for a few peerages and so on for his kin and cousins.

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[3] Lady F. Leveson Gower.

[4] Henry Chaplin.

I have had a terrible week: every sort of faction being exhausted to prevent the passing of our Education Bill—but they have failed. And I hope in a fortnight to get rid of the whole concern. . . .

2 Whitehall Gardens,
August 1st, 1876

Last night went off very well. It was to have been an adjourned debate and a great attack on Ministers; but Granville and Hartington were too sensible to indulge Gladstone's vagaries, and he so impetuous that he rose the first night which gave me an opportunity to follow him—and the affair then collapsed, as I would not, nor could not, give them another day, as they declined bringing forward a vote of censure. I did not speak at all to my own satisfaction, wanting energy and therefore fluency, and clearness and consecutiveness of ideas; but it did well enough as I got out my principal thoughts and the latter part, not ill-reported, will be read by the country. I hope profitably.

I have many cares and the personal ones not the least. It is five o'clock and I am yet in my *robe de chambre,* having had a crowd of people with me the whole morning and everyone on anxious and disagreeable business.

I am glad, for distraction, that I am going to dine out, and where do you think? At the Alingtons! You must be astonished. I am. Gerard is like Mother Hubbard's dog. "She went into town, to buy him a coffin: and when she came back, she found him a'laughing."

I am sure on Sunday, I thought I was nearer his funeral than his feast: and he makes not the slightest allusion to his illness!

I hope you are well and happy.

Your affectionate

D

2 Whitehall Gardens,
August 2nd, 1876

I went to the Chapel Royal this morning which was full of a grim cousinhood: I never saw so hardfeatured a clan collected: intensely Scotch. Tarbat,[5] to the astonishment of the congregation who to the last believed he would bolt, uttered his part with audible significance. There were many present who had never heard him speak before, though they had known him for years.

I had half engaged to go to the breakfast, but the Duchess of Wellington told me that they were "all looking forward to my speech at the breakfast!" I was seized with a panic, having much to do this morning which certainly would not have been achieved after an hour of artificial domestic enthusiasm, a speech, and perhaps a glass of champagne.

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[5] Lord Tarbat, the second son of the then Duchess of Sutherland and heir to the Earldom of Cromartie.

I told Monty, whom I had taken with me, to use my brougham; and a very handsome lady on whose golden train I had unhappily trodden—but who, instead of being angry, rewarded me with radiant smiles—took me home in her Victoria. We departed, though drawn only by one horse, like Antony and Cleopatra in triumph down Pall-Mall, etc., to Whitehall Gardens. The lady was the magnificent Mrs. "Mashall."

Early in August Lady Chesterfield came to London—"I shall certainly call on you, dear darling, on Saturday a little after six," Disraeli wrote. "I shall perhaps be your only friend in town. I have never read a word of the Bravo case, though it absorbs all classes . . . I have not had time to 'study the case,' which the Duke of Wellington says he has done, and is doing. 'I am well up in my Balham,' he said to me." And in explanation of his own remissness, Disraeli added—"A hot and heavy night, I fear, in the House of Commons on endless education." The hot and heavy night duly came off; but it availed the Opposition nothing. The story of the Government's success is told in a letter dated August 5th to Lady Bradford:

Our new moves all succeeded, and we carried the report of the Bill in its entirety by sitting last night also. Not that I was there for the final and easy stages. It is to be read a third time this morning. I don't think we have lost 4 and 20 hours by this burst of factious fight, and it has shown the utter demoralisation and rancorous breaking up of the Liberal party. It seems split into fragments—

all working against each other. One night the whole of the Home Rulers deserted to us, and next day the Scotch Presbyterians joined them. Then Goschen answered Forster and Rylands Mundella!

Sullivan, the fieriest Ultra-Montanist, declared that he would sooner send his children to a Church of England School than to a secular. Whereupon Mr. Greene, the fieriest Protestant in the House, vowed that in preference to a secular, he would send his children to a Roman Catholic School; and then there was mutual cheering and embracing and always ending in increased majorities for Government.

The greatest fiasco was Newdegate, who denouncing the Government and announcing himself frequently as the leader of the Protestant party, was not followed by a single member of the National Club. . . .

With the passing of the Education Act, the end of the Session was in sight. But Parliament did not rise without an expiring splutter. "I could not see Lady Chesterfield on Saturday," Disraeli told Lady Bradford, on August 8th, "though I had promised to drink tea with her, but the House of Commons sate from noon till 9 o'clock without intermission. It was the long-menaced question of Mr. Cave's Mission which used to make us a little nervous in old days; but it is a corpse that could not be galvanised and ended without even a division." He added some items of social news and concluded his letter as follows—"I write this early, for I have a Cabinet at 12, a hard morning and House of Commons at 4. *I am quite tired of that place.*"

On August 9th he was able to provide her with a definite time-table of his movements:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
August 9th, 1876

We had a Cabinet this morn at 10 o'clock. What do you think of that? And I have just come from it and, instead of going at once to the House of Commons which I must do, I was obliged to return here to receive the Lord Justice Clerk of Scotland, who has come up purposely for the interview in which I am about to offer him to become one of the new Lords of Appeal: a seat in the House of Lords for life—not a peer, but a Lord of Parliament—and £6,000 per annum. All this must make a Scotchman's mouth water!

It was lucky I returned, or I should have missed Bradford with whom I had a pleasant chat. And I am to come and see you directly. I go on Saturday to Osborne where I stay till Monday, and I meant not to have returned to town, but to have travelled from Osborne to Hughenden, and had arranged all—but now all is changed. I shall return here on Monday and come down to Castle Bromwich by an early train on Tuesday. By this, I shall hope to be able to share with you a summer scene and not interfere with your great party whom, I calculate, you expect towards the end of the month.

I shall try to go to the Fish Dinner to-day as it is greatly wished I should do so, but I am very tired. I "pant for brooks," and the green shadow of stately trees and for a dear companion who has the same tastes.

Ever hers,

D

The significance of the concluding words of his letter of August 8th is made plain by his letter to Lady Bradford on the 10th:

10 Downing Street,
August 10th, 1876

I went to the Fish Dinner though I ought not to have done so—but I am not sorry I did, for I am no worse and I brought home Bradford with me, who had come down by boat and, I think, was pleased with his journey back. As I did not hear anything of him when you first mentioned him, I thought your plans were changed and I had arranged mine quite differently—however, I rejoice to say all is right and I actually hope to be with you on Tuesday.

I have just come from the wedding. Mabel was much the most distinguished bridesmaid. She looked very well; had a pretty and becoming dress on which showed off her figure. I had to go and sign the book and have promised to go to the breakfast at half past one, if I can.

However, by returning home I have got an hour, in which I had to write a letter to the Prince of Wales on a subject which you may guess, when I tell you the Faery insists upon my changing my name at once—and my principal colleagues agree with H.M. I thought it might have been postponed for some months. There is one person to whom I shall never change my name and to whom, I trust, I shall ever be

Hers sincerely,

D

CHAPTER V

August–October 1876

"BULGARIAN ATROCITIES"

Disraeli reached Hughenden on August 22nd from his visit to Lord and Lady Bradford at Castle Bromwich near Birmingham:

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
Half past four, August 22nd, 1876

Just arrived, place looking beautiful and, to my surprise, very green. My conscience twinges me that I did not personally thank Bradford for the happiest visit I ever paid, and the memories of which will sustain and animate me in my solitude. The truth is, I was a little nervous about the Birmingham business and a little upset, which is my custom when I leave those I love. You must thank him for me; for he greatly contributed by his unceasing kindness and pleasurable suggestions to this most agreeable week.

They were very tumultuous at Brummagem after we separated; perhaps you heard them. And there was a party collected at every station till we got to Banbury, with vociferous ejaculations and congratulations to "the noble Hurl of Beaconsfield," etc. etc.

The publication of my Address to the Electors of Bucks has given rise to a new crop of leading articles, which will not displease you: The *Times* particularly. In the *Standard,* I observed a translation of John Lemoine's article, which was noticed partially in the *Times* a few days back: if I can, I will send it to you.

This is a stupid letter, but it is scrawled on my arrival, for the post calls at 6 o'clock and I only do it for this hope, I fear a faint one, that it may catch you at Castle Ashby to-morrow.

Give my kindest regards to Bradford and tell him that I was much delighted with Drayton and Pakington. If you were at home, I would ask you to embrace the darling children. I think Miss Helena[1] is getting my favorite; Laddo[2] told her to kiss me and she obeyed.

Ever your devoted

Beaconsfield

Disraeli's days of solitude at his country home were burdened with labour and anxiety, but were also suffused with the glamour of great events played upon an Eastern chessboard. The position of the pieces changed from day to day—often from hour to hour; and from the seclusion of his library he pulled the strings vigorously and in the end decisively:

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
August 26th, 1876

You have sent me the most charming letter—not only that you have ever written to me—but, I think, that ever was written. Castle Ashby[3] is before me in all its æsthetic spell and dream-like beauty: its terraces and fountains and flights of angelic steps; and long avenues and golden gates; and the Elizabethan mansion of delicately colored stone relieved by tall creepers full of parasitic grace.

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[1] Lady Bradford's granddaughter, afterwards Countess of Sefton.
[2] Lady Bradford's grandson, afterwards 5th Earl of Bradford.

Now I must tell you a telegram has, *this moment,* arrived by messenger announcing that last night the Prince of Servia summoned 6 consuls of the signatory powers of the Treaty of Paris and, in the presence of his Minister for Foreign Affairs, asked them to transmit to their respective Governments his application for their good offices with the Porte for peace. This is great news; my mind has been upon it the whole week and will give me great trouble, but that I don't mind about. News gets about so in these days that even this may not be a secret when you get this letter. But say nothing about it if even so—at least not as from me, except Bradford of course.

Your devoted

B

Hughenden Manor,
August 26th, 1876

I write to you at an early hour, for I cannot count on my time at this moment—so much is going on. Cyphered telegrams are pouring in and the labor of these is heavy and vexatious. You helped me once at Weston—do you remember? Necessity has made me a little more adroit than in those days, but it is very exacting and fatiguing when one has so much to think about and so much to write.

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[3] The seat of Lord Northampton.

Monty, who was so clever at this work, is in some wild archipelago in Scotland and even Algernon Turnor, whom I could trust, leaves Downing Street to-night—succeeded by Mr. Jem Daly, who has quite enough to do in Downing Street even if he were competent to help me here, which I doubt. Last night at the witching hour, and I having retired, there came a messenger from Fair-hill, Derby's Kentish home, and I was obliged to get up!

I write to you always in such a hurry that I feel I do not answer half your enquiries or notice half your remarks. I must apologise. I do not quite agree with you in the painful contrast you very fairly notice between the physical condition of the lord of Castle Ashby and the scene in which he exists. My idea of him is that spite of his infirmities, he lives in a sort of æsthetical beatitude and that his vision is perpetually blessed with forms of grace and beauty. I think very often of the place and your too charming description of it. . . .

I am obliged to end this hurriedly—a messenger having just arrived with a great post. Mem. that I tell you, confidentially, a wonderful story of Sir Salar Jung. I have not time now, nor room. I hope Laddo has got the pony I sent him.[4] Remember me to him and his sisters.

Yours faithfully, B

Hughenden Manor,
August 28th, 1876

. . . I hear from London on very high authority, that Lord Granville wrote Rupert's[5] address! I don't hear that

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[4] A wooden horse which Lord Beaconsfield sent for Lady Bradford's three-year-old grandson.

[5] Lord Carrington's youngest brother, who was standing in the Liberal interest for the vacancy created by Disraeli's elevation to the peerage.

Rupert has any additional supporters: all the gentry are against him and all the leading farmers, and he depends on the Dissenters who have some power in the Southern part of the County, but we know its limit.

I heard from Monty indirectly to-day: from Lady Hamilton. She was his Secretary and an agreeable one. Hamilton and Monty had gone to canvass for our man—Donegal Election. I learnt the result on Saturday night, by telegraph, which told me that we had retained a seat I was quite prepared to hear we had lost . . .

I have sent an article from the *Cologne Gazette*—now the leading journal in Germany. I think it is a just vindication of the English Ministry and the Parliamentary Session.

My messenger arrives now with boxes from Balmoral and many bags. Adieu! With many kind thoughts,

B

I have read the Balmoral boxes: one is to bear the congratulations of the Empress of Germany on my "elevation" —and then the Queen adds "I wish to express in writing, what I mentioned in conversation to you at Osborne, my willingness to settle any part of your titles on your nephew." My nephew is only 10 years old and his name is Coningsby. He must fight his way.

To Lady Chesterfield

Hughenden,
August 28th, 1876

Dear Darling,

I am very busy. What I thought would happen when I was at Castle Bromwich but which I was vexed to think then was prevented by the party intriguing for a general war, happened almost the moment I got home—and I have lived in a great stir ever since—and without a Private Secretary! It is more difficult to make peace than to make war. However, it must be done.

I hear from London—high authority too—that Lord Granville wrote Rupert Carington's address. What do you think of that?

Remember me to Lady A.

Your affectionate

Beaconsfield.

I send you some grouse.

By the end of August affairs in the Near East had reached a critical phase. "I have no news," he told Lady Bradford on the 29th; "nothing—or things which I can't venture to write about. . . . I have had one of the most remarkable and most confidential letters from 'Master Leopold.'[6] It will surprise you and shows, I think, he is the clever fellow which he says he is not." And to Lady Chesterfield he wrote on August 31st:

Here there is only one business and that is one I cannot write about. If we don't get peace it will be owing, in no slight degree, to our enlightened public who, as usual, have fallen into the Russian trap, and denouncing "Bulgarian atrocities" call for the expulsion of the Turks from Europe, which would lead to another Thirty Years War.

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[6] The Queen's youngest son, afterwards Duke of Albany.

The situation was, in fact, being gravely prejudiced by the agitation which now sprang up in England over the "atrocities," an agitation based on public indignation which was fanned into flame during the next few weeks by the impassioned appeals of Mr. Gladstone:

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
September 1st, 1876

I have a moment but that is all—but it shall be yours. From the first post at half past 7 to the second post at 11, and then till this instant when the daily messenger at half past 3 is off, so to save the post in London, which I hope will give you this—I have not a moment's peace—every day is the same—nor is it possible to have to deal with more critical affairs. Everything has gone against us—but nothing so much as the "Bulgarian atrocities" which have changed the bent of opinion in England as regards Turkey and which are worked not merely by enthusiasts, but of course by the Opposition and by Russia's agents, though the Government have no more to do with the "atrocities" than the man in the moon. Gortchakoff is, of course, in the seventh heaven and smiles while he proposes an armistice of three months—equivalent to renewed war with renovated energies!

Think of me sometimes.

Yours ever,
B

On September 2nd the harassed Prime Minister gave Lady Bradford a graphic picture of the life which these tumultuous days imposed upon him:

Whatever happens I must write to you who remember me amid all your bustle and all the calls on your time and thought. But I can only repeat the bulletin of yesterday—aggravated; and so it will go on.

This is my life. I am called at 7—and my caller brings me my post—the Government bag and the outside letters, still very numerous. If I can get to my Cabinet for work at 9 o'clock, I think myself content—and then I do a good deal. But at 11 the second post arrives—and all the newspapers which I must inspect, or at least glance at—and then my letters! It is the post that, if you write, brings one from you. It generally rewards me and supports me for the whole day—but not always. At one o'clock comes the daily messenger with all the boxes—and I have really to work immensely hard to get him off by half past 3, in time for the London post. It is absolutely necessary that I should have half an hour for luncheon, which is my real and almost only meal—on which I live.

It is hard to manage all this, but it is an exception when a telegram or two in cypher do not arrive about the same time—as they have done to-day. So pardon this—more than pardon it. I scarcely can write, and yet I should be unhappy if I did not. It is like building the walls of Jerusalem with a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other. I write quicker to you than "our own correspondent" at the seat of war, in the midst of a battle.

By the by, all the papers are arguing whether the great victory of the Servians may not retard peace. Fortunately, we have now a military attaché, a General officer of our own, at Turkish Headquarters, and he informs us that there has been no victory, no battle, scarcely any fighting: things remain the same.

I am glad you like the little horse: you ought to back him for the St. Leger.

Adieu! With 1,000 kind thoughts.

B

Hughenden Manor,
September 5th, 1876

This is not a telegram even, but a trembling wire only that scarcely breathes. Things here remain the same: in almost supernatural tension. I have heard from Constantinople three times to-day! but can tell you no good news.

The Bishop of Manchester is as you say, *fou,* and Lord Russell, having his brother-in-law Ambassador at Constantinople, halts and hesitates in his dotage. All his latter years he has been swearing by Lord Derby and Elliot—and now is going to call Parliament together in November to denounce them both.

Gladstone "who had retired from public life," can't resist the first opportunity and is going to declaim at Blackheath—having preliminarily given the cue to public opinion in a pamphlet. I wonder what Hartington thinks of all this activity? He is quietly killing grouse at Bolton Abbey, and this very morning sent me four brace. Good fellow!

The state of affairs is not one very favorable to the nervous system—but mine is not yet shaken.

Always yours,

B

Gladstone's renewed activity was embarrassing, but not wholly unexpected. "The storm is high," Beaconsfield wrote on the 7th, "but my nerve is not shaken, and if all are as firm the storm will be weathered. I wonder what Hartington thinks of it? About the last words the Duchess of Manchester said to me were—'now mark, all this retirement from the leadership, etc., by Gladstone is mere sham. The moment he sees an opportunity he will come to the front.' He has come."

On the 8th he wrote to Lady Chesterfield:

Dear Darling,

I sent you some grouse yesterday. It will show I was thinking of you—to write now is almost impossible, I have so much to do. I have to fight with 10,000 lions! But I send this to-day, as I am obliged to go up to town to-morrow to see Lord Derby and may miss both Saturday and Sunday posts: indeed, there is no privileged Sunday post here unless a messenger comes down that day, which he does not always.

I prefer decyphering the telegrams myself to having a strange secretary here. What should I do with him when he was not decyphering? I should have to amuse him and eat with him and drink with him and talk with him, or else his feelings would be hurt! I think it would quite finish me.

Nobody seems alarmed about Rupert. The only thing that alarms me is that they are introducing bribery into County Elections—a thing quite unheard of here! But say nothing about it.

Yours ever,

B

He thought it significant that the Liberal leaders should be in London in September. News of their presence there had been given him by a friend—"A friend of mine writes, he went the other night to Haymarket Theatre. There were three empty stalls before him. The play 'Heir at Law' and the actor to see a Mr. Clarke. Probably you know all about him. Into one of the stalls came Lord Granville; then, in a little time, Gladstone; then, at last, Harty-Tarty! Gladstone laughed very much at the performance. Harty-Tarty never even smiled. Three conspirators." Within a few hours Beaconsfield found himself in London:

To Lady Bradford

10 Downing Street,
September 9th, 1876

I write you a line from Downing Street where I unexpectedly find myself. I left Hughenden so early that the 2nd post had not arrived. I hope, therefore, I may find a line from you when I get back at 7 o'clock. I have had a satisfactory morning with the great Secretary and, as we are agreed, I think we shall conquer. Though when all the world is mad and there are only two keepers, the latter should be in danger.

Gladstone's pamphlet, which he had the impudence to send to me, is quite as unprincipled as usual, though on the surface apparently not so ill-written as is his custom. The reason why; because it is evidently dictated, so it is not so involved and obscure; but more wordy and more careless and imprudent. He is already beginning to eat his words —*vide* to-day about the Turks—and before he is many months older, he will eat more. It is raining cats and dogs here: I hope it is at Greenwich, where G. is beginning to spout his pamphlet.

The Faery is very nervous about the Bucks election—which won't come off for a fortnight. All that I can tell her is that every gentleman and every leading farmer is on Fremantle's Committee, and only two landlords of any mark, Lord Chesham and Sir H. Verney, support Rupert. I hope the general insanity may have subsided in a fortnight; if not, I really can't answer what may be the result of popular passion and the ballot.

Had we not weakened Derby's hands with this Bulgarian atrocity we should by this time have had a peace satisfactory to Europe, and highly honorable to this country.

Yours ever,

B

His stay in London was, however, a brief one, and for the most part he directed matters from the country:

Hughenden Manor,
September 11th, 1876

. . . Your letter of this morning was very agreeable to me. . . . What you tell me about Louise[7] is most interesting. Of all my solutions of the Eastern Question her capturing Constantinople never occurred to me.

By the by, you mistook, or rather misapprehended, my anecdote about her. I did not tell it to prove her wit or wisdom (though I wish not to question either) but to show her devotion to another person. Her nightmare is that Gladstone should resume the leadership. I have also seen deeper into her mind than that, for her dream is that Harty-Tarty should so advance and plant himself in the House of Commons, which he will do in time, that she indulges in the hope that he will be the Premier, and that Granville must be satisfied with his old post, or probably by that time disappear himself. Therefore she shrinks from sudden change, and that is quite consistent with her goodfellowship with me. That is not disagreeable and tends to the same end.

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[7] Duchess of Manchester.

I think Gladstone's pamphlet outrageous. Its point was, for ethnological reasons no less, to expel the Turks as a race from Europe. Finding, even before the meeting, that he had exposed himself, he writes a letter to the *Times* to say that he did not mean the expulsion of the Turkish people, but of the Turkish Ministers—I doubt not he meant the expulsion of the Ministers—but they were not Turks. The meeting expected to hear how the expulsion was to be managed, and they got instead of it a new edition of the Andrassy note.

Yours,

B

I am in good heart—but don't mistake; things are not more "cheery."

For the next two days he had scarcely time to write. "A telegram only," he scribbled on the 12th. "I think Derby's speech will quench the agitation—judging from the tone of the press. . . . The *Times* cannot bear his saying we have not changed our policy one inch. If the agitation here collapses the arrogance of Russia will proportionally diminish." And on the 13th—"I have not time even to date this. I write merely to thank you for your charming letter, and to say that my opinion is that Fremantle will win and by a good majority—his friends think a considerable one. . . ." On the 15th he wrote at greater length:

> . . . The same post that brings me your letter brings me one from Prince Hal, enclosing one he had received from Lloyd Lindsay in Servia; a very interesting letter and showing up the whole truth of this wicked conspiracy of which the poor Servians are the victims—an easy, quiet race who cut off their fingers and thumbs that they mayn't be enlisted, and who go into battle with their Russian officers in their rear firing pistols at their own men.

And later in the day he added a postscript:

> Half past one. Since I wrote the above, messenger has brought important and good news from Constantinople. The new Sultan *confidentially* has put himself in the hands of England and will follow our advice in everything. I think it not improbable that we shall "pluck the flower safely from the nettle danger" after all. The new Sultan told Elliot that he was having the English Blue Book translated for him, and that he had read all the debates in the House of Commons about the "Bulgarian outrages," etc. etc. What do you think of that? You had better not mention all this except to Bradford.

To Lady Chesterfield, who had invited him to Bretby, he wrote on the 15th—"This is the greatest pressure I have ever had during the whole course of my life. I hope you will be able to make out my handwriting; I can't." The tangle in the Near East was not easily unravelled:

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
3 o'clock, September 24th, 1876

A single word amid much confusion. It always is so when I take my own pleasure, which is to write to you. I "write in the whirlwind and scribble in the storm." I have two messengers and some telegrams, who, though silent, are exacting, watching me now like hungry hounds.

The difficulties at Constantinople are ineffable—and I do not see my way at all; but must try to pierce even a fog. This great victory of the Turks which I prepared you for, for we have now a military attaché, a General officer, at head quarters—will not render our course more easy. Had it not been for "Bulgarian atrocities," we should have made a peace satisfactory to Europe and very honorable to England. As it is, I do not know what will happen. It shows that individual character has something to do with the conduct of affairs, though it is the fashion of the 19th Century to deny that, for Sir H. Elliot has managed to nearly pull down a popular and powerful Ministry—and he is a very second-rate man. And all because he is an invalid—probably has a torpid liver, and never sees anybody, and is obliged to be in bed! . . .

You don't say when you go—and what is your direction.

Since Gortchakoff, they say, insists upon a Congress and nations to be represented by their Prime Ministers. I hope I shall not have to go to Stamboul.

Your letters are a great delight to me, and I am,

Yours ever,

B

Hughenden Manor,
September 25th, 1876

. . . We are in immense throes and much depends on the next 4 and 20 hours. It is not as bright as it looks in the newspapers—but I feel we shall win, notwithstanding the faction (real faction) which at a great national and imperial crisis, we have to encounter. If we succeed in carrying a satisfactory treaty, I think the Greenwich Tartuffe[8] will have a long face: certain I am, in that case, that before Parliament re-assembles he will be one of the most disconsidered public men in England.

But shall we succeed?

Yours ever,

B

Hughenden Manor,
September 26th, 1876

. . . We are in the very throes of the great affair and I know not what an hour may produce, but am calm and tolerably hopeful. I think, if we conclude peace, Gladstone ought to retire into La Trappe. I can fancy that grim visage digging his own grave and writing letters to Mrs. T. to join him, instead of to those rabid cockneys the electors of Greenwich.

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[8] Gladstone.

I really think the Sultan is going to turn out trumps. I told you of his translation of the Blue Book and of the Bulgarian atrocity speeches. Now, I hear he has really only one wife and no handmaidens. But the wife—that's the point. No Circassian with no knowledge of the world but of her own mountains. But a very pretty modiste of Pera: a Belgian. He used to go and buy gloves at her shop and other delicacies, and then he said to her suddenly one day—"I wonder if you would ever marry me?" And she replied "Pourquoi non?" And so it was done. She entirely guides him, and that is the reason why he is doing away with all the old Seraglio life which has cost so much, and more in moral power even than in money: though he is also economical, even avaricious.

Yours ever,

B

The muffettees are a great solace, warm, yet light and soft.

In the middle of these great events came the result of the by-election. The seat was held, but by no great majority. In a letter to Lady Bradford, Beaconsfield made light of the result:

I wish you had sent me a telegram. The Faery sent me one—quite enthusiastic. Poor dear! She thought we were going to be beaten. I had told her the majority would not be great but sufficient. It ought to have been a couple of hundred more; but what does it signify now? The fact is, though it was not for us to say so, the Buckinghamshire monster majority was an entire myth founded on the last contest which was a mock one; and yet being Prime Minister or about to be, I could not run any risk and so brought up my votes. It cost me between £1,500 and £2,000; but the County were so disgusted that they insisted on paying it.

The last days of September went by with the Turkish problem still unresolved:

Hughenden Manor,
September 29th, 1876

"There is no gambling like politics," as Lord Palmerston once said to me—and you a few days since almost the same; and now, when only 8 and 40 hours ago the Emperor of Germany and Lord Derby were both congratulating the world on the immediate prospect of peace, war seems imminent—and a long one. So much for Mr. Gladstone and his friends who will avenge the "Bulgarian atrocities" by the butchery of the world.

I am not quite so surprised as my colleagues and the world in general, for you might judge from what I intimated about secret societies at Aylesbury I had an instinctive inkling of mischief. The remark at the time was, of course, depreciated and ridiculed. I believe it's only a week ago. I certainly did not suppose the vindication of my prescience was so near at hand. I sincerely wish I had been a false prophet.

Yours ever,

B.

10 Downing Street,
October 5th, 1876

I send you a little line, though I am hardly *capace* to write private letters, but they are very welcome. Letters from those I love soothe and support. Nothing can be more critical or more interesting than the position. Gortchakoff, misled by Gladstone and Co., has made a false move, and his proposal for Russia to occupy Bulgaria the very heart and most precious portion of European Turkey, with Constantinople almost in sight of the contemplated frontier, has roused and alarmed John Bull. Your friend the *Times* ratted this morning. It was like the verdict after the long trial of the Claimant. England looks upon the proposed occupation of Bulgaria as a real Bulgarian atrocity. When he sounded Austria on the point, Austria enquired what will England say? Gortchakoff answered instantly "England will certainly agree." Instead of that, I sent Schouvaloff off with a flea in his ear; told him that it was a double violation of treaties, etc., etc., and that Russia must take the consequences which would be most grave. Austria gave another kick and the thing has collapsed. But what will happen next I can't tell you. Constantinople is in such a state of excitement that I fear the people won't obey the Sultan who seems, as I anticipated, a real man.

During an interval on October 7th when more important news was lacking, he mentioned that he had made Gladstone's brother a Lord Lieutenant. "Magnanimous!" And—"Did you observe about A.B.C.?" he asked. The reference was to A. Baillie Cochrane, afterwards Lord Lamington, who had just been appointed a Trustee of the National Portrait Gallery. For some days yet, success and failure hung in the balance. "I can't give you good news," he wrote on October 10th, "I think in the most favorable view it is a toss up. If Turkey accepts our proposal Russia will be, at least for the time, checkmated. I think Gortchakoff wants war. The only good thing is the improved feeling in England; but I fear it's too late." But on October 12th he was at last able to report that his patience and strength of purpose had met with their reward. He did so in letters to both his correspondents. "I have been a bad correspondent of late to those I love," he wrote in his letter to Lady Chesterfield, "having been absorbed by affairs of great anxiety and doubt—very difficult at all times; but those difficulties immensely aggravated by the treasonable conduct of that wicked maniac Gladstone. . . . But I hope we have 'confounded their politics'; and though he has done everything to weaken and baffle us in doing our unquestionable duty to our Sovereign and our country, I trust he has failed."

In his letter to Lady Bradford he was even more explicit:

To Lady Bradford

Confidential

Hughenden Manor,
October 12th, 1876

I have just got your letter—your most amusing and delightful letter. To a hermit like myself it is as a visit from charming people. I hear their lively voices and watch their sunny smiles. But, though I never see you, you never can be forgotten by me; for Cuckoo tells me something about you all day long. Time is so rapid that the day seems like one long springlike carol.

I could not write yesterday. I was so anxious and so uncertain. It was a neck and neck race. We had taken a decided step—many thought a rash one. Elliot was to tell the Porte that the recommendation of the Armistice by England was England's last step; that, if refused, she should attempt no longer to arrest the destruction of the Turkish Empire, but leave her to her fate: and that our Ambassador would leave Constantinople.

There were great and just objections to this course, because when an Ambassador retires he cannot re-appear. All personal influence is lost and in 1829, the last time when the Embassies left Constantinople, war between Russia and Turkey instantly ensued. And yet affairs had come to such a pass, through the conduct of Gladstone and Co., that it was necessary to try this last card—and it succeeded!

But I did not know till late last night that Servia had accepted. I think now all is safe for some time. The Porte has been crafty—I should rather say very wise and clever—in enlarging the proposal and making the armistice for 5 or 6 months. This will give us breathing time. I don't think any Power will dare to disturb the European peace while an armistice exists. By that time, too, the people of England will have quite recovered their senses—and I hope Gladstone will be shut up. I feel much relieved and though there are plenty of difficulties before me, the great oppression of the last six or seven weeks is removed.

There is a good deal of patronage as you say—but pleasant. I have got to make a Bishop, however, and that's never pleasant, though good.

Yours ever,

B

CHAPTER VI

October–December 1876

THE CONFERENCE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

Although Turkey and Servia had expressed their willingness to agree to an armistice and by so doing had greatly relieved the situation, there were still anxious days to be lived through before Europe could feel herself secure against the menace of war. Behind the combatants the figure of Russia loomed large and threatening; and until the intentions of her rulers were finally made known it was inevitable that the shadow of tragedy should cast its gloom over the Near Eastern scene. Lady Bradford had been elated at the news which the Prime Minister had recently given her; and he now uttered a warning against premature rejoicing:

Hughenden Manor,
October 14th, 1876

. . . I have comparatively a load removed from my mind as you say: because Turkey has put herself in a strong and respectable position and we, having succeeded in an ultimatum—always a perilous enterprise—I feel England is now free comparatively speaking from much embarrassment; but I don't suppose the difficulties are over. Only now, if Russia refuse the armistice on which all along she insisted and which we, consequently, obtained, she will be obliged to show her cards, and Europe will know that she always meant war. My opinion is that she was feeling her way till Gladstone's move; that decided her. But the Empress of Russia reads the *Times* the *first* thing every morning, and Her Imperial Majesty may, therefore, smell some re-action before orders for the first gun to be fired are given. It is a moment of awful suspense; and, like all awful moments, will probably last a long time. . . .

I heard from Lord John Manners this morning from Balmoral where he remains till the 17th. The Faery in excellent health and good spirits—but anxious about Russia. "Her denunciation of her late Ministers last night was couched in plain English, worthy of her Grandfather. I was really startled at its vehemence and suggested that Mr. Gladstone had really never mastered nor understood Foreign Policy." This is an extract from John Manners. The Queen is going to be Godmother to Johnny's infant!

Yours ever,

B

10 Downing Street,
October 20th, 1876

I must snatch a moment to thank you for your letter, which reached me this morning from Hughenden.

We had a Cabinet yesterday which then dispersed, from which the world infers we are unanimous and that there is no split. I am obliged to remain for a little time as there is much to do.

. . . The Russians, assuming that nothing would induce the Turks to agree to an Armistice, agreed with us to settle affairs if it were granted. When they found, to their astonishment, that we had succeeded, they shuffled and said it was too long and preferred "Lord Derby's proposal of a month or six weeks." We never made such a proposal. Being told by Servia (*alias* Russia) that they wanted a *long armistice,* we proposed *"not less* than six weeks"; and now the Russians pretend our proposal was 6 weeks. Nice fellows!

Yours ever,

B

Lady Chesterfield wrote, passing on to him rumours which reached her of changes in the Ministry:

To Lady Chesterfield

10 Downing Street,
October 20th, 1876

Dear Darling,

I ought to thank you for 1,000 kindnesses, and yet I really have not time or heart to do so. It is a rough world. . . .

By the by, you never told me the names of the new Ministers who were *in petto.* Living in the country, as you say a hermit, little gossip reaches my ear so I am quite in the dark in the matter. I daresay Lady A. knows who seems, by your account, to talk as much nonsense as usual.

The Emperor of Russia cares as much for the Christians as you do for Spurgeon and he and all his court would doff (don?) the Turban to-morrow if he could only build a Kremlin on the Bosphorus.

If you have a war, Lady A.'s favorite, Gladstone, has caused it.

Yours ever,

B

To Lady Bradford

10 Downing Street,
October 23rd, 1876

I had to call on the Prince of Wales this morning, whose affairs are almost as troublesome as the Orient. I have half engaged to go to Sandringham on the 11th for a day or so, and if I can manage it and things are at all more tranquil and settled, shall try to get down to Ingestre on the 13th to see you—but the chances are much against me. Still the object is great and I shall struggle for it. I am obliged to remain in town and have not left it since the Cabinet, notwithstanding the impertinent article in the *Times* who seem to me, now, to be wrong in everything as their first article, which assumes that Russia had delivered an ultimatum to the Porte, is all moonshine. I hear very bad accounts of Delane and that Walter is in America and that all the clever writers, who write nonsense when there is no political head to guide them, are greatly injuring the paper—by their shots that don't hit the white. The *Telegraph* and the *Morning Post* are well managed and written with information.

The game is by no means as yet half played, and you must not be too sanguine—which your tone a little indicates. There will be yet many vicissitudes, I hope not catastrophes. The Faery is very excited.

Elcho has declined the Lord Lieutenancy lest it should compromise his independence, which is dearer to him than life! What a fool. It is not a political office, and he professes to be at the same time my supporter and my "friend."

I saw Louise,[1] who was very amusing and told me a great many things. I was sorry when Prince Edward[2] came in and stopped her flow of fun. She would settle the Eastern Question by making Constantinople a free Port with gambling tables! I dropped down on Saturday, with Monty, to Gunnersbury, to meet "dearest Jane"[3] and hear the news. Alas! dearest Jane has got a sore throat and I could not see her. C. Villiers was there. Rothschild says Russia has promised to make Roumania a King as well as Servia. Schouvaloff is here, and I believe every day with Lady D.!

Yours ever,

B

Further disappointing performances on the part of some of Lord Bradford's race-horses evoked renewed protest from the Prime Minister. "A day of dull business," he wrote on October 24th. ". . . Bradford really should leave the Turf. His position becomes ludicrous there. I fear Gussie will not feel for you as you were prepared to feel for her. I am enraged about Bradford, but I remember I wrote about this a year ago and you were all much offended thereat—so I am silent." The next day it was Gladstone who enraged him—"I write in a dense fog. . . . It rather becomes the fieriness of my other correspondence—

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[1] Duchess of Manchester, who had recently been on a visit to Constantinople.
[2] Of Saxe-Weimar.
[3] Lady Ely, a Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Victoria.

full of darkness and difficulty. However, these may yet be vanquished and disappear, though Gladstone has translated his pamphlet into Russian—to assist us!" To Lady Chesterfield he wrote on the 28th, that there was a streak of light on the horizon—"and notwithstanding all the obstacles we have had to encounter—not the least the treason of Gladstone—I think we shall succeed in our objects, the maintenance of peace and the security of our Empire." He elaborated his views somewhat in a letter of the same date to Lady Bradford—"Whether it be the victory of the Turks, or whether it be that the Russians commence to comprehend that England will stand no nonsense, a great change occurred last night—and for the better. It was dark and dubious when Lord Bradford called on me yesterday as it ever yet has been. Indeed, it has been a terrible week. However, if we win, that little signifies." Two days later the situation was little changed:

10 Downing Street,

We are not out of the wood, but we sometimes think we see light in the distance. I hope not a mirage. I have had now nearly a quarter of a year of it and feel a good deal older. Certainly it has not been a dull life but a very hard one—in my case at least. . . . Schouvaloff called on me with a message of horror and indignation from the Emperor of Russia about the *Golos.* I said I was under the impression that the press was not free in Russia. He answered me that he had been libelled himself in the *Golos* and accused of having sold himself to Germany. I remarked that the press was free in England, but that if such an article had appeared in a respectable paper against Prince Gortchakoff, I would undertake to say I would have made the Editor apologise.

November made a dramatic entry with an announcement of good news which, within twelve hours, was superseded by a message of calamitous import, which in its turn was to be cancelled twenty-four hours later:

To Lady Bradford

10 Downing Street,
November 1st, 1876

Yesterday (Tuesday) I received two telegrams when I woke—they had arrived in the night. One was from our Ambassador at Livadia saying that Prince Gortchakoff considered the armistice now settled, and making suggestions about ulterior points—and much more important ones—the basis of the Conference. The other telegram was from our Ambassador at Constantinople, dated Monday night half past 10 o'clock (Therapia) saying that the armistice was settled very satisfactorily and honorably to the Turks, that Ignatieff had been conciliatory throughout and that he was to execute it formally in the morning, having an appointment with the Grand Vizier to that effect. So I thought my cares were over and I remembered what your friend Delaney said to me on Sunday, "that the Minister who opened Parliament with an announcement of peace in the Queen's speech, would be in a prouder position than any Minister since Mr. Pitt."

A little after noon came the awful news that General

Ignatieff had received orders from Livadia to deliver the offensive and hostile ultimatum you are now well acquainted with! This was the consequence of the Turkish victories and the humiliation the Emperor felt at the probability of the Turks reaching Belgrade. The pretext, that the Turks carried on hostilities during negotiations for armistice, is quite hollow. The Russo-Servian army has never ceased attacking and harassing the Turks during the whole time. Besides, negotiations for armistice never suspend hostilities as a matter of public law.

What will happen now? I think it looks as black as possible. The whole affair has been a conspiracy of Russia from the beginning, and she has failed in everything—even in active warfare the Porte has defeated her. I don't think she can stand it and she will rush to further reverses. . . .

10 Downing Street,
November 2nd, 1876

As I have told you there is "no gambling like politics"—and here we are with the Armistice signed!

You sent me this morning a brief but invaluable line of sympathy—than which from you there is nothing I more cherish and appreciate. I sometimes think you don't understand this and grudge what to me is often a solace and a charm. I can't write any details—until this moment I have not had a moment of pause—4 and 20 hours, indeed, of awful crisis.

Yours ever,

B

To Lady Chesterfield

10 Downing Street,
November 3rd, 1876

Dear Darling,

I must write you a line, though you know in what a confusion I live, not favorable to letter writing.

I think the Turks have done well. Their only reason against a short armistice was that they were fighting on an exposed table land without refuge, and their opponents had good winter quarters, a very nice town (Alexandratz) and a cultivated country of woods and villages. Now the Turks have taken all these and so will be very comfortable for the winter and are, in fact, masters of Servia. We shall have an anxious time of it during the armistice and the Conference which the Russians want to hurry—I dare say for no righteous reason. Lady A. has I suppose sold her Turks and bought Russians, which accounts for her political convictions.

The ham has arrived—most welcome, and most kind of my dear friend to whom I send my love.

B

To Lady Bradford

10 Downing Street,
November 4th, 1876

Cabinet just over: very tired, and a little harassed—but I won't let the post go without a line.

We have agreed to invite the Powers to a Conference; the place, Constantinople; and each Power to be represented by two Plenipotentiaries. I assume the Ambassadors at Constantinople and six greater men; what you call *swells*.

Who is to go for England? I have a good mind to go myself. How will it all end? So many plots and counterplots and such Machiavellian brains to deal with!

The Cabinet will be sitting all this week and, if I can, I shall go to Sandringham on Saturday (with Monty) and then the Cabinet will adjourn for a week or ten days. So if there be no critical foreign business demanding united counsel, I have a chance of getting to Ingestre on the 14th. In the meantime I dream of Monday. The days are so short and dark that it is difficult to get out, though I try.

Yours ever,

B

On second thoughts Lord Beaconsfield decided that he could not himself leave England to take part in the proposed Conference:

10 Downing Street,
November 8th, 1876

The appointment of Lord Salisbury as Ambassador Extraordinary to the Conference seems to give great satisfaction. I do not despair, if the Conference take place, that we may succeed in our main purposes; but what I dread is that Russia will secretly encourage and invite the Porte to refuse the Conference and then privately arrange with her. I have detected some traits of this intrigue and Ignatieff is equal to anything. By proposing a Conference on a broader basis, i.e. two Ambassadors or plenipotentiaries from each State, a certain delay has been obtained and a proportionately greater importance has been given to the Conference—which may balk him. But if his original proposition of an immediate council of the Ambassadors at Constantinople and none else had been agreed to, I think he would have succeeded. He may yet.

A wondrous marriage; Lady Theodora Grosvenor, my friend, who is to forfeit a large fortune left her by her father if she marries, has resolved to defy that cruel condition. She is going to marry a man who is a recluse and who never enters society except the hunting field, but is said to be an interesting character of considerable gifts and accomplishments—Mr. Merthyr Guest—a brother of Sir Ivor. Lady Westminster says she believes that under her roof are the three happiest people in the world!

In the circumstances Lord Beaconsfield was faced with a difficult task in making his speech at the Lord Mayor's Banquet, and one which he would gladly have forgone:

To Lady Chesterfield

10 Downing Street,
Lord Mayor's Day, November 9th, 1876

Dear Darling,

Thank you for roses, thank you for violets, thank you for grapes of many colors—but thank you most of all for a charming letter more delightful than even roses, or violets, or grapes.

This is one of the accursed days of my life—always terrible—yet this time thrice accursed—when I have to make a speech, every word of which will be critically scanned throughout Europe by the old cox-comb at Livadia and the fox at Vazin and all the rest.

I see no chance for the December visit. I am deep in

December engagements none of which, I suspect, will be fulfilled. But it is very kind of you always to think of

Your affectionate

Beaconsfield

Before leaving London for Sandringham Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury conferred. "We are neither sanguine nor desponding," he told Lady Bradford. "I think England is all right again; but it will be long before the mischief the 'atrocity agitation' has done us on the Continent will be remedied. In June last we dictated to Europe and now every Power looks askance." From Sandringham he wrote to Lady Chesterfield:

November 12th, 1876

Dear Darling,

A little line to tell you I am alive and where I exist. I came down here and found a land of snow and Baltic breezes and to-day so sleetish and implacable, that I shall not leave the house. Lady A. won't let me go even to Church.

The Duchess of Manchester is here and Lord Hartington, who watches her every glance and hangs upon her every accent. Happy Lord Hartington! I heard from the Glassalt Shiel, Lake Muich, this morning—The Queen never was so well: not only takes long walks, but climbs mountains. She is delighted with her romantic resting-place, where she hears nothing but the roaring of stags and the murmur of waterfalls and watches the snowy mountains in their sunset splendor.

I would write more, but the paper is so greasy it beats me.

Your affectionate

B

Urged to it by the knowledge that Lady Bradford was to be there, he snatched two days for a visit to Lord Shrewsbury at Ingestre. The hours during which he saw her were not sufficient, and from the welter of papers with which he was called upon to deal in the privacy of his own room, he despatched notes to her:

November 15th, 1876

I have had a very interesting—and rather good—bag this morning, and am in very good heart, notwithstanding your hopeless despondency of last night which I suppose, as usual, was a dose of the *Times*—dictated yesterday by Schouvaloff to Delane. That I know.

When the shooters are gone, I hope I may see you somehow and that you are not going to lock yourself up till luncheon "letter writing!" Is there any chance of our having "our morning walk" a little after eleven or so?

Yours ever,

B

November 16th, 1876

My holiday is over! I am obliged to go up to town immediately. I must not complain as I ought not to have come at all, and I had a happy day yesterday. I have got to telegraph something in cypher which keeps me in my room, but I hope to get down and see you a good bit before my departure—which is, I believe, about half past 2.

Yours ever,

B

For the next few days pending the assembling of the Conference there was a lull and Beaconsfield had as much social as political news to write about:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
November 20th, 1876

Your letters are a great solace and satisfaction to me—almost my only joy. Salisbury went off this morning about eleven; Monty accompanied him to the station. He had several secretaries and, I think unhappily, several members of his family—Lady Salisbury and his eldest son and his daughter! I fear these latter will not be as serviceable as his secretaries. The French papers say the Conference is delayed because M. de Salisbury is accompanied by Mme. de Salisbury and seven children! It was not quite so bad as that, but bad enough. . . . Sir W. Stirling Maxwell is to have "the Thistle." He esteems it "as a very high and rare distinction," which he may well do, as a pure commoner has not had it since the Union, or rather its creation—at least with exceptions too "rare" to be remembered now.

At a dinner party given by Lord Derby he met the American Ambassador—"'Minister' Pierpoint as Mrs. Hichens calls him":

"Minister" Pierpoint diverted me a little. If Tilden is returned, he will be recalled and 90,000 persons also turned out of office—from plenipotentiaries to twopenny postmen all must go. What a Constitution! But that's nothing. It is now such a deadlock that it is more than doubtful whether there will be any decision. "What then?" I said. "You must legislate. You must have a convention Assembly and change your Constitution." "No," said he very much through his nose and very tranquil; "we shall have recourse to violence." I think it not unlikely that General Grant who is assembling troops at Washington, will perhaps declare the country must be governed and end by re-electing himself.

"Here is a strong expression for an Empress as well as a Queen," he wrote on November 23rd. "'*What an infamous lie* to say that the Emperor Alexander's speech at Moscow had been occasioned by Lord Beaconsfield's masterly Address at the Guildhall!' What do you think of that?" He mentioned that Lord Salisbury, after visiting Paris and Berlin, had been obliged to go to Rome—"otherwise Italy would have been so offended that she would always have voted against us at the Conference." During the closing days of November Beaconsfield paid two visits to the Queen at Windsor. "I was most graciously received," he wrote on the 26th, "the Queen on entering the room gave me her hand which I tenderly embraced. It really was a little like 'resignation,' which would have delighted your amiable friend Lady A. who the world says is 'so good-natured.' . . . The Duke of Manchester is to have the vacant ribbon of St. Patrick, and Lord Redesdale is to be made an Earl, but the honor dies with him." Earlier in the day he had written to Lady Chesterfield—"Lady A. frightened Selina with a paragraph announcing my resignation." After his second visit on the 28th, he wrote to Lady Bradford:

November 29th, 1876

I went to Windsor yesterday and had an audience—and a very long one of an hour and a half—at six; and sate next the Queen at dinner afterwards who talked a great deal and very well on all subjects public and private . . . I am very busy trying to make a Bishop of Truro. Nothing gives me more trouble than the Episcopacy. There are so many parties, so many "schools of thought" in the Church. Cornwall is full of dissenters like a rabbit warren. And any High Jinks there would never do. And yet the dissenting pastors, particularly the Wesleyans, the most numerous, are no longer popular with their flocks. So there is an opportunity for an adequate man.

Lord Salisbury embarked on December 2nd, and as the Prime Minister reckoned that no development of importance was likely while he was on the high seas, he decided to accept the invitation which he had received from Lord and Lady Alington to visit them at Crichel. There he found a party which was "very large, and ought to be very brilliant if persons were as agreeable as their rank and fashion, their dresses and their looks. But then they are not." His ill-humour was, perhaps, due to the fact that Lady Bradford had postponed her arrival till the Tuesday, and that on that day had come a telegram to say that she had found a further postponement necessary till Wednesday. With the assembling of the Conference the pressure of work rapidly increased:

To Lady Chesterfield

2 Whitehall Gardens,
December 13th, 1876

I arrived here on Monday, and have been very much engaged ever since. It rains telegrams. Nor do I see any probable end of the affair, at least for this year. Whether I shall be able to leave town for Xmas is now very doubtful.

I paid a long visit to Crichel, but not a very agreeable one. Indeed, country houses do not suit me: the life is too conventional—half dressing and half eating. Then, I do not care for slaughtering pheasants, which abound at Crichel: one day they killed 1,200 and the sky was darkened with their up-rushing, and the whir of their wings was like the roar of the sea. I don't think I shall ever go to a country house again.

Thank you, thank you for pears and ham. I sent you yesterday a humble offering of three brace of grouse. They came from a famous Yorkshire moor and the birds for me are always picked.

All the world is talking of a private meeting at Stafford House yesterday—to subscribe for the poor Turkish soldiers who have neither pay, food, nor clothes. Lord Blantyre gave a 1,000 guineas. This is the 3rd Conference and a slap in the face for the "Arch Devil."

Yours,

D

"A very horrid line," he wrote on the 15th, "for everything is hurried and pressing. . . . I probably shall have to go to Windsor to-morrow, but I hope not." Circumstances proved too strong for him and a visit to Windsor was duly paid:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
6 o'clock, December 16th, 1876

I have just returned from Windsor which has taken up the whole day. I found the Faery most indignant about the St. James' Hall "Conference." She was so eloquent that she reminded me of Gussie! She thinks the Attorney General ought to be set at these men; it can't be constitutional. She seems now really to hate Gladstone. I said a good word for Granville and Harty-Tarty—to whom, I was sure, she might look if necessary, with confidence. She is sure the country is right and that when Parliament meets we shall be triumphant. "It has gone on for 6 months—this noise—and suppose mistakes had been made—what then? But I will never admit that any mistake has been made from first to last." Bravo!

. . . It is only a week to Xmas, and everything more uncertain and unsettled—I won't say than ever—but uncertain and unsettled. There is a Cabinet on Monday which, it is supposed, may be of a very decisive character.

I enclose 2 documents: one amusing, the other touching.

1. a letter which speaks for itself and is illustrative of a passage in the life of the greatest Tartuffe of this age:

2. the last words of one you knew—and to my feeling, heroic.

I was glad about the fat Cygnet which came from Orford, but fear it may have been too fresh. I have seen Harlowe.[4] She seems quite done up; so I sent her also something to eat. A little sympathy gives appetite.

Yours ever,

B.

The St. James's Hall Conference which had so exasperated the Queen had been organised by the opponents of Beaconsfield's Turkish policy, on December 8th. It had been addressed at sessions held both in the afternoon and in the evening by a very large number of speakers; but the great draw had, of course, been Gladstone. Gladstone felt certain that the Turkish policy of the Government was not endorsed by the country and he said so. He said so, indeed, with characteristic emphasis and circumlocution—"We think—and I believe it is probable that every man in this room thinks, and every speaker who has spoken from this platform to-day has said or implied it—we think, and I may say we know, that the power and reputation and influence of England had for a long period of time within these last twelve months and in regard to this enormous question, been employed for purposes and to an effect directly at variance with the convictions of the country. . . ."

But while Gladstone and those who thought with him were talking, Lord Salisbury was acting, and by December 20th the Prime Minister was able to report to Lady Bradford notable successes to the credit of his Lieutenant:

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[4] A nickname of Isabella, wife of the 3rd Earl Howe.

2 Whitehall Gardens,
7 o'clock, December 20th, 1876

I have just returned from Windsor and after a long conference with Lord Derby and an order for a Cabinet next Friday, I steal a moment for you.

Salisbury has succeeded in all the great points of his mission as regards Russia. There is to be no Russian occupation of Bulgaria; Bulgaria is to be divided into two provinces which will, or rather would, strengthen the Porte: the Circassians are not to be banished: the population generally are not to be disarmed, which would create civil war—and other things; but we understand and believe that the Porte will accept nothing and wishes to fight. There was a change of Government yesterday at Constantinople but I doubt whether that will help us.

Monty is here, but ill. He has seen, and is seeing, Gull. I wish he would go away for a couple of months and try sea air. The Faery was charming to me. . . . She really thinks G. mad.

Yours ever,

B

I quite count now on being with you on Saturday.

The postscript to his letter proved to be unduly sanguine, for the Queen was strongly of opinion that while affairs abroad remained so critical, the Prime Minister should not leave London. Lord Beaconsfield, consequently, remained where he was:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
Xmas Day, 1876

Your dear letter gave me some solace to-day and I felt proud and happy in my ruby mits. We had some other offerings yesterday. Two ladies came in a brilliant equipage. They left a most extraordinary bouquet of white flowers; lilies of the valley, roses, and hyacinths: graceful and fragrant; and some verses which were an anagram of my name, or, rather, my title. The ladies were young and are described as pretty. Who were they? Monty is immensely *intrigué*. The whole affair as striking as the "White Farm."[5] Then, in the evening, came a Xmas Card from the Faery and signed V.R. et I. (Regina et Imperatrix)—the first time I have received that signature. And an enormous packet. Unfolded, it took the shape of a large folio volume—Faust, illustrated with a weird and romantic pencil by a German artist who died almost before his work was completed. Nothing can be more admirable. But the binding of this volume exceeds in work and splendor all the treasures which Dr. Schliemann has disinterred at Mycenea. There was also a letter with this volume which must be inlaid in it. The Faery hopes it may not be unworthy of a place in the library at Hughenden.

This is Xmas Day and I dine quite alone. This need not have been—but I had not heart to go out when I might have passed the day with those who are so dear to me.

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[5] Lord Alington maintained a white farm at Crichel. The ladies were probably his daughters.

I can give you no absolute information as to affairs. Ninety-nine out of 100 will tell you that war is certain between Russia and Turkey. But when everybody wishes for peace, and most of all Russia, I can't help hoping that some golden bridge may be constructed, even if it be gilded, to extricate Russia from its false position. To-day when we were to have heard so much nothing has yet arrived, which makes me wildly think that, at the last, something has been devised.

As man lives on hope my future is Weston. I will not renounce easily the pleasure of seeing you—if not this year—very early in 77, which the Faery's card hopes may end my anxieties and bring us all peace.

This is a sad, scribbled letter; but I put off writing till the last moment of a very anxious day.

Yours ever,

B

On December 28th he wrote—"This is supposed to be a very critical day. . . . In such a state of affairs one can never count on one's movements; but my goods and chattels for Weston have never been unpacked and I could depart at a moment's notice." He had, in fact, evolved a plan for visiting Weston on January 2nd. "On Monday I go to Windsor to dine with the Empress of India. . . . If affairs are tranquil, for the moment I shall arrange that the London train stops at Slough on Tuesday to take me on to Weston. But I can answer for nothing. I may have even to call a Cabinet on that very day." In India Lord Lytton was holding the Imperial Assemblage at which

Queen Victoria was to be proclaimed Empress of India, and the Faery was "much excited" about the doings at Delhi. "They have produced a great effect in India and, indeed, throughout the world, and vindicate triumphantly the policy of the measure which was so virulently, but so fruitlessly, opposed." His last letter of the year to Lady Bradford was written the next day:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
December 29th, 1876

After I wrote to you yesterday the visitor arrived—if she can be called a visitor who will be my companion for the rest of my life—and is now in my room. You could not have presented me to anything more full of charm, yet I should be grateful for other gifts—my patrician stick which I have used to-day and my ruby mits which constantly delight me. I wrote to you yesterday with a wildish plan which yet may come off. But to-day has been a tremendous day of telegrams and affairs and the last thing was Derby asking for Cabinet to be summoned for Tuesday. Desperate, and determined not to yield easily, I have fixed it for Monday! So I have yet a chance.

Yesterday I dined at Rothschilds, a round table and a little party: amusing. The Duke of Cambridge, the Derbys (she having returned) Lady Elizabeth Adeane and Charles Villiers. Schouvaloff was to have been there, but could not arrive (from Paris) in time. He returned this morning.

Do you remember two tall, rather gigantic Misses Jenkinson, daughters of Sir G. Jenkinson who wants to be revived into Lord Liverpool? One of them has become the devoted companion of the dear, deluded Denbighs and coached by Monsignor Capel (Catesby) was living with them, on the point of entering Holy Church. The day before yesterday, or so, she was out in the morning (they hoped at matins) and when she returned, standing before the fire with arms akimbo—she is nearly 6 foot high—she informed them she had just been married to—Lord Maidstone!!! and with Protestant rites! Oh! oh! oh!

I trust most earnestly that your convalescence continues, or rather is complete. Send me another bulletin.

I am to dine to-day with the Stanhopes.

Yours ever,

B

CHAPTER VII

January–April 1877

ORDERED OUT OF LONDON

The opening months of 1877 were a trying time for the Prime Minister. He was almost constantly unwell from early in the new year until Easter, and was obliged, before the adjournment of Parliament for the Easter recess, to leave London for Hughenden on urgent medical advice. Throughout this time, too, the news from Turkey gave cause for much anxiety and unceasing vigilance. His letters to Lady Chesterfield became far less frequent, the actual number which have been preserved being 33 only during the year 1877 as compared with 126 and 70 during the years 1875 and 1876 respectively. To Lady Bradford he still wrote constantly—of serious matters when he had political news of importance to communicate, and when such news was lacking, in a tone of banter not always innocent of mockery, about his incursions into the life of high society:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
2 o'clock, January 1st, 1877

The Cabinet is just over and, I doubt not, another will soon be called; but, D.V., I shall hope to have the pleasure of finding myself at dear Weston to-morrow. Windsor will veil my visit and only Derby, of my colleagues, knows of my project. Monty can't come; he is going away again unwell—but I have made good arrangements about telegrams and all that and I think I shall have no trouble. Don't let me interfere with your ecclesiastical hospitalities. I had calculated that they did not commence till the 5th and that I should rather be in your way after that.

My dinner at the Stanhopes' ought to have been amusing as the people were not ill-chosen. I sate between my hostess and a Mrs. Stanley. . . . She was lively rather and knew some things. . . . She told me exactly what Gladstone got by his pamphlet—£2,000, a large sum for a pamphlet which sells for 2 or 3 shillings; but more probable than the paragraphs about his profits in the newspapers which were monstrous. Then there were Lord and Lady Ilchester; and Dolly was there and Chas. Villiers and it was very very dull—at least I was and got away at half past 10.

The John Manners are in town, and John called on me with a note from Janetta saying I had never dined there since I was in office—which was both true and wise—and asking me Thursday or Friday. I could conscientiously say I was engaged on both days; but to make up for my neglect I paid a morning visit—and of course found John at home as well—quite disgusting—sitting with his wife! Then the dinner siege began again—it was not fair on his part—and yet I regard him so much that I was obliged to give in and so entrapped into a morning visit and a dinner too!

I expected, for my sins, to meet that sallow lady Mrs.

M——, and ordered my carriage at ten o'clock. She was not there; but was represented by her silly son and Mr. Edgar Drummond. . . . The dinner was of course horrid. I was silent and rather brutal, drank a great deal of what the doctors now order and got away as soon as I could.

Au revoir,

B

Events of importance intervened and his departure for Weston was postponed. He explained the position in a letter to Lady Chesterfield:

10 Downing Street,
January 3rd (?), 1877

Dear Darling,

I have just come back from Windsor. The Queen is imprisoned—like the Pope. All the country about is under water and she cannot go to Osborne because there is scarlet fever, or measles, or some other ill that flesh is heir to, raging in her curtilage.

There is a Cabinet on Friday and a good chance of my getting to Weston on Saturday, though whether I shall be left quiet there for 8 and 40 hours is very doubtful.

Lord Salisbury has succeeded in everything as regards the Russians and much distinguished himself, but now it is said, and feared and believed, that the Turks will fight. I wish they were all—Russians and Turks—at the bottom of the Black Sea.

Your affectionate

B

His next letter, dated January 7th, was also to Lady Chesterfield:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
January 7th, 1877

Dear Darling,

I arrived here yesterday afternoon and hoped to have been able to have sent you a little line; but found such an appalling collection of Despatches, telegrams and letters that I sank before them. How they could have collected in 4 and 20 hours I still marvel, for I had a messenger at Weston at 7 o'clock on Friday who, of course, cleared off everything till his departure from town.

You left us on Wednesday morning and from that moment the pressure began: two messengers every day. However, I was resolved to remain, though Royalty Herself was "quite surprised" that I had left town! I knew the cut of the Conference better than Her Majesty and that affairs are never precipitated at Stamboul, though Emperors may threaten and Plenipotentiaries be positive. They are to meet again to-morrow when everything is to be "settled"—one way or the other. Nevertheless, I shall not be astonished that the Conference will again adjourn. The fact is, Russia would give a good deal to get out of the scrape into which her blustering has entrapped her, and the Porte knows this and seems resolved to make the Emperor and his princely Minister eat the leek—very difficult to digest, if not impossible. So you may be prepared for anything except the humiliation of the Turks.

For the next few days there was, indeed, little to write about except the steadily diminishing prospects of a successful termination of the negotiations at Constantinople:

To Lady Bradford

10 Downing Street,
January 8th, 1877

I have nothing to say, or rather I have no power of saying it; but I missed writing yesterday and I can't bear another blank day occurring. Yesterday I had the Turkish Ambassador with me, most long and wearisome and very unintelligible—French, mumbled with rapid gestures. Poor Musurus looks like a worn out game-cock stripped of his plumes. Not content with yesterday, he brought to-day the special Turkish Envoy (our Salisbury) who bore a letter to me from Midhat, and therefore I could not refuse. He spoke for more than an hour without interruption, but clearer and better than Musurus.

I think, myself, that the Conference is on its last legs. Salisbury succeeded in moderating the Russians and I have done my best to moderate the Turks; but we have found out that Bismarck is resolved that Russia shall go to war, or that Gortchakoff, whom he hates, a little despises and is yet very jealous of, shall endure ineffable mortifications by retreating without the honors of war, after all his blustering. . . .

10 Downing Street,
January 9th, 1877

I sent you a stupid letter yesterday and I send you a stupider one to-day—for there is only one thing going on and that one difficult, if not impossible, to write about. The Conference seems to be on its last legs and yet totters on from day to day. More last words, always a sad and sorry *L'envoi.*

It is a delicious day here—the dove seems to have returned to the ark with an olive branch. I went out myself at noon and walked on the Embankment by the river side, till it stopped at Blackfriars. Had it continued I think I should have sauntered on to Blackwell or Greenwich—but I was very tired when I got home. A line from one who would have been a delightful companion by the Thames side, cheered me last night.

Ever,

B

2 Whitehall Gardens,
January 10th, 1877

. . . There is no news; the Conference which was to have been holden to-day is postponed till to-morrow. I hope it may be in consequence of my earnest advice to Midhat Pasha, given to his Envoy Extraordinary, and who telegraphed it instantly to Constantinople. The Envoy, an Effendi—I forget his name—is an Armenian, though all Turks look to me exactly alike. Strange, that should be the effect of so simple and unimpressive a headdress as the Fez. . . .

The Faery is indignant at being controlled in her will by the forces of nature—inundations and scarlet fever and other pests and powers. She wants to see me again, i.e. because she is kept at Windsor.

On Januray 13th he wrote that he thought at last that everything was over at Constantinople. "The Conference meets again on Monday; but Salisbury had a private interview with Midhat Pasha yesterday and it is hopeless. The Turks will yield nothing. I'm not sure, were I a Turk, I should think them wrong." Yet five days later he was still writing—"There is no news—'a dreary silence and a dread suspense.' But it is really believed that on Sunday morning a telegram will tell us to write *Finis*." He was himself unwell and added at the end of his letter of the 18th—"I shall have to confess my indisposition to the Faery who has asked me down to Windsor; and she will send me Jenner who, by changing my remedies, will retard the cure."

By January 20th he was less pessimistic about the Near Eastern difficulty, though no better in health himself:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
January 20th, 1877

I have seen Bradford who seemed to me fairly well: in good spirits and was, I think, walking. I am a prisoner and am annoyed at it, for the moment is inconvenient. The Faery naturally wishes to see me at such a time and gives me every day till she departs; but Leggatt will not hear of it and considering what awaits me in another fortnight, I care not to disobey him. But it is harassing—much more than any Eastern Question which by no means appals me, I assure you. We shall have a time no doubt of some trouble and suspense and much that will require both pluck and prudence; but they will carry us through

—as they carried you through your visitation week which I infer, from what you write and Bradford says, was quite successful.

There is not a shade of news and will be nothing now for some days. I think it probable that the Russians will keep their army on the Turkish frontier for some time to veil their discomfiture and really ignominious position; then after a while the Emperor of Germany, or some such being, will address a Christian appeal to the Czar, who will be becomingly magnanimous and sacrifice everything to the peace of the world! I only hope the Turks won't get too bumptious and do something silly.

He had now been confined to his house for a week, he told Lady Chesterfield on the 21st, and on the 24th he had no better report to make to Lady Bradford—"This is a sorry return for your most agreeable and most unexpected letter; but it is just to tell you how I am. Not as well as yesterday—which Leggatt who sees me every day says is entirely owing to talking at the Cabinet and not from exposure to the air, which I feared was the cause. Very probably he is right for the Cabinet was very long—nearly three hours." Monty Corry was likewise indisposed—"Monty appeared to-day. He came up to see Gull, but goes to Ireland to-morrow. I don't think there is any more business in him. A great blow in my life—and so unexpected." The Prime Minister's banquet on the eve of the opening of Parliament was impending, and his friends hastened to send him gifts of game:

January 26th, 1877

Last night and this morning brought me such a quantity of provisions—I suppose in contemplation of my banquet where nothing is wanted—that I am quite embarrassed and know not how to distribute them; two cygnets, ten brace of woodcock, half from Sir Ivor Guest at Muchross and the other moiety from Lord O. Arlington: six brace of pheasants from the Duke of Wellington and four foie gras pies from Baron Rothschild. It is really quite absurd as my banquet is complete without them and not one of them shall I touch myself.

"I have got sixty peers to dine with me on the 7th February," he told Lady Chesterfield. "I wish they would always attend the House of Lords in equal numbers." He added that the Duke of Rutland was to carry the crown at the opening of Parliament. "When the Duke of Argyll had this honor, he let it fall!" On January 29th he had a shocking piece of news to write to Lady Bradford:

10 Downing Street,
January 29th, 1877

An awful domestic calamity! Lady Howe (Harlowe) threw herself to-day out of her bedroom window on to the leads of her mother's house, and died instantly. General Foley came to tell me this as I was going to the Cabinet. I could not see him and he wrote a letter, which, being busy, I did not open till I was in the Cabinet—that Cabinet which I have just left. He wanted me to assist him in keeping it out of the newspapers. I have no means of that kind.

What an end of a life which seemed, on the surface, endowed with every accident that could make life happy. . . .

We all want Salisbury and don't know where he is.

Yours ever,

B

Lord Salisbury was on his way home, and on February 7th Beaconsfield wrote—"I have got a Cabinet this morning at noon—a compliment to Lord Salisbury though I dare say he would rather remain in bed." While progress with the Near Eastern negotiations hung fire Lord Beaconsfield's letters to Lady Bradford were mostly of a personal character or concerned with the doings of society:

10 Downing Street,
February 12th, 1877

I called on Ida yesterday who had quite a levee, and it continued for Monty called on her at a later hour and she was still surrounded by the fair and brave.

I dined at Sykes on Saturday. It was a repetition of the dinner at Ferdinand Rothschild's. The only person who was not dull was the Prince. I sate next to him and he really was agreeable; told me some things I cared to hear and things of indifference with grace. What most surprised me was that after long cogitation and considering every public school, they have resolved to send the two young Princes to the Britannia Training Ship. He asked me what I thought of the plan. I said I thought it was original. . . .

I wonder if you ever mean to return to town and if I shall see you much when you do return. I came to you much disabled last time, and nothing but the feeling that I had seen you so little and was about to see you less, could have authorised, or rather impelled, the effort. I think, therefore, you ought to have spared me half an hour instead of making, which apparently you had done, simultaneous appointments. Such things much annoy me.

Yours,

B

2 Whitehall Gardens,
Monday, February 26th, 1877

Your letter is most welcome to me and I send you the first line I have written, for my correspondence with the great lady, though frequent, is telegraphic.

I have had a fair night—the first one without pain. The attack has been very severe and unexpected, as I have been guarding against its contemplated occurrence for the last six weeks. It has always been menacing—in fact, I spoke in the gout on Duke of Argyll's Motion, and that settled it. I hope I have nothing now to fight against but weakness, for I can scarcely walk across the room—but I have the rallying power—or had, I should rather say.

What ought to rally me now is the prospect of having defeated Governments and baffled Bismarck and secured European peace. Greater than defeating G. and B. keeping the Cabinet together.

Pray write whenever you can and tell me what you are doing.

Yours,

B

March came and found the Prime Minister no better. "I get on slowly," he wrote on the 1st, "the weather being so much against me. I don't see how I can get to the Faery, and yet there are pressing reasons why I should." He added that the King of Spain was going to be married —"to his cousin the daughter of Montpensier." On the 6th at a dinner party he met with an unfortunate misadventure:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
March 7th, 1877

I hope this may just catch you from your morning walk. My dinner yesterday was dull and inopportune: all the people I have refused to dine with, or had thrown over. De La Warrs, Balliol Bretts, Borthwicks!!! After dinner our host changed his seat to sit by me and was profuse with his expressions of gratification at my coming, when he knew I had been so indisposed and had declined so many. And then putting down his immense paw he seized my poor sick hand, which I had taken out of its sling and studiously kept out of sight, and saying he considered my conduct an act of friendship gave me a squeeze which nearly made me scream. I got home by half past 10 and bound the suffering member in cotton wool, etc., but it is not well this morning.

Did you hear that Claud Hamilton and Monty took the Chinese Ambassador and suite to the Alhambra on Monday? Their Excellencies were immensely pleased and received behind the scenes with becoming ceremony. But first of all they had to receive an assurance that the legs of the Peris and Houris were not *in puris naturalibus*.

They were sceptical; but allowed the *première danseuse* to be presented to them.

You will meet the Chinese at dinner to-day.

Yours ever,

B

"I can't give you a good account of myself," he wrote a week later, "my hand is still ineffective; but what worries me most is my sight, for the gout has seized on my visual orbs." Nevertheless he struggled against the prospect of becoming a confirmed invalid and compelled himself to go into society:

March 14th, 1877

I went to the Londonderrys. . . . There was good music in the evening, but I went away at half past ten. I feel by that time quite exhausted. I trust, however, I shall live long enough to baffle Bismarck and humiliate Gortchakoff and prove your new friend, Harcourt, a false prophet. . . . I have now been in London since the 14th of October—never away for a moment except that short though sweet visit to Weston;[1] and for that I got scolded—"surprised to find Lord Beaconsfield out of town, etc." No wonder I have the gout. However if I secure peace and a glorious diplomatic triumph, I suppose I must prefer my sufferings to undistinguished health.

Two days later he wrote in dismay at the unexpected arrival in England of General Ignatieff:

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[1] He seems to have forgotten his visits to Sandringham and Crichel.

Private

2 Whitehall Gardens,
March 16th, 1877

How are you?

The Ignatieff arrival is a thunderbolt: nothing could be more inopportune and nothing more awkward than his going to Hatfield. I am asked to meet him there Saturday and Sunday and was very glad I could conscientiously refuse both days, being engaged to Lord Derby to-morrow and the Peels on Sunday. Absolute dismay at Head Quarters about the visit: telegrams and letters about it every hour. It seems that Lord Salisbury wrote to him a week ago suggesting that "when all this turmoil is over" he should pay Lord S. a visit at Hatfield. I daresay Miladi is at the bottom of it.

Let me know about your dinner yesterday and your Ball. Monty has not appeared yet, so I suppose he was very late there. He generally gives me a streak of news about you.

Yours ever,

B

March 22nd, 1877

Your visit yester morn though brief, too brief, was one of the most gracious and consolatory of my life and sustained me through many trials. I hardly thought the day would ever end, or that myself should last as long. The dinner was successful, though I could not partake of it, or contribute to its grace and gaiety. Prince Hal who had invited himself and, for the sake of the Ignatieffs, who took out Madame, as arranged by himself, scarcely spoke to her at dinner, talking to his neighbor Lady Londonderry, but chiefly across the table to Duchess Louise who sate on my right, for we had a longer table than usual and I sate in the middle. I think the Prince altogether cut the General and appeared occasionally to be almost embracing Schouvaloff. What could have happened in the interval between the royal offer of coming and its accomplishment? Quite clear he had taken up the Schouvaloff side—for there are two most violent parties—and would not countenance these insolent intruders. Monty sate on the other side of Madame and took advantage of the unexpected opportunity and got on very well with the great lady who is pretty and, they say, very agreeable, except when he recommended her some Apollinaris Water. Not the custom of the Russian ladies. When they offered her wine, "Sherry or Manzanilla?" etc. etc., she always answered "any one," but never refused "any one." But is very calm and collected and must have had, therefore, an early training at it. The General seemed much charmed with a lady whom he persisted in calling the Duchess of Hamilton, but who really was the jovial and not absolutely unpretty wife of the Cocksparrow,[2] who himself came in after dinner, having been banqueting at the Chancellor of the Exchequer's and very jealous of his better half dining under happier auspices. Schouvaloff and Lady Galloway, far apart, found consolation after dinner in a most picturesque *tête-à-tête* on a golden sofa in a corner of the saloon. The fine ladies who had heard that Madame Ignatieff was even finer than themselves and gave herself airs, determined not to yield without a struggle. Lady Londonderry staggered under the jewels of the 3 united families of Stewart and Vane and Londonderry, and on her right arm set in diamonds the portrait of the Empress of Russia—an imperial present to the great Marchioness. Madame Ignatieff had many diamonds and a fine costume, but paled before this. As for Louise,[3] she set everything on fire, even the neighboring Thames; her face still flushed with the Lincoln racecourse, her form in a spick and span new dress scarcely finished, and her hair *a la Marie Antoinette,* studded with diamonds, which by the by were stuck in every part of her costume. "Lady Bradford ought to be here," she said. "Why is not Lady B. here?" And Echo answered, Why? The Prince said to me, "Ask the Duchess why her hair is not in curls. Is it because it is Lent?" . . .

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[2] George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll.

I fear you will hardly make this out. I am writing in what is called Cat's Light. I continued very ill yesterday and had a bad night—but they thought it better not to send for Gull to-day. They had reasons.

Adieu.

B

Before the end of March Lord Beaconsfield's doctors insisted on his leaving London—a decision which he conveyed to Lady Bradford on the 24th. "A hurried line. I am moving like yourself. Two hours after noon I shall be at Hughenden. They say I must go out of town, even if it be only for 8 and 40 hours." Incidentally he hinted at the difficulties which he had experienced owing to divisions in the Cabinet—"Yesterday was the most important meeting of the Cabinet which has yet been holden, and I trust we shall never hear any more Bathism, Lyddonism really Gladstonism, within those walls."[4] From Hughenden Beaconsfield managed a visit to Windsor:

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[3] Duchess of Manchester.

March 27th, 1877

I made my voyage to Windsor yesterday in a brougham with closed windows and so returned. . . . My audience was most agreeable and the longest I ever had. It exceeded the hour and was never dull or flagged for a moment. She wanted very much to know all about the Ignatieff dinner party. She thinks the conduct of the Prince of Wales was merely incipient illness. It was then all coming on. She showed me his letter to her written in pencil, and two letters to herself from Paget. It is a serious illness and if not dangerous, too near that. . . . She talked to me a great deal about Hughenden; she has quite made up her mind to pay me a visit. "But it must be in the summer; now you are in the House of Lords you will always be free." She asked me how long the drive had taken me. I replied under two hours with my London horses. She said—"I could do it with my horses in an hour and a half." I think you will have to come down to receive her. At any rate she will see your portrait in the library.

He was further cheered by better news from Constantinople. "I think after all we shall have peace," he told Lady Chesterfield, on March 29th, "though there are so many slips between Russian cups and Russian lips that I shall never be sure till I hear that the Grand Signor has asked the Russian Ambassador to dinner at his palace on the Bosphorus." He wrote in a similar strain to Lady Bradford two days later:

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[4] See also his letter to Lady Bradford of October 20th, 1876, p. 101.

Hughenden Manor,
March 31st, 1877

. . . I send this to Weston. I have not much holiday for the telegraph is not idle but the weather is westerly and genial and for the first time in my life I have found benefit from change of air. Not strength yet, but appetite which, I suppose, leads to strength.

I think affairs look well, and should be more certain did they not seem incredible. In fact Russia has surrendered at discretion and England has completely triumphed in her main object: prevented her invasion of Turkey!

I had a long letter from the Faery this morning on State affairs—and it ends thus. I hardly like to copy it, but beg you to burn this letter.

"The Queen has *now* a *favor* to ask of Lord Beaconsfield. It is, that his portrait should be painted for her—for Windsor—by the great artist Angeli who painted herself and who is coming to England immediately. It would only be the head, and as he is wonderfully quick he would require but very few sittings. Lord Beaconsfield's career is one of the most remarkable in the Annals of the Empire, and none of her Ministers have ever shown *her* more consideration and kindness than he has!"

In such favor one rather anticipates a speedy fall.

Nothing can be more ridiculous than the Duchess's new phase of religion.[5] It is a fresh and very striking proof of my doctrine of the inevitable influence of reaction.

Yours ever,

B

With the arrival of April a new development gave piquancy to the situation on the Continent:

Private April 3rd, 1877

I hope things are going on pretty well; but we are not out of the wood. Firmness and tact will, I think, carry us through. If Bismarck has *really* resigned—he has *formally*—it will be amusing! It is nearly all up with Gortchakoff. What fun!

And on April 4th he brought his various pieces of news together in a letter to Lady Chesterfield:

Hughenden Manor,
April 4th, 1877

. . . The Prince of Wales sends me a message this morning that he is getting on capitally: his wound has healed and he means to go abroad in a few days; but he will not be able to escort the Princess part of her journey, which I regret.

Her Majesty has expressed a gracious wish that I should sit for my portrait for her—by Von Angeli, a wondrous

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[5] On April 10th Beaconsfield wrote to Lady Chesterfield: "I suppose you know that the Duchess of Sutherland has joined the Ritualists! And she was a very Cameronian!"

WESTON, THE HOME OF LORD AND LADY BRADFORD

artist who only paints Queens and Emperors and in whom Queens and Emperors believe—and my portrait is to be placed in the gallery at Windsor! So I have not yet fallen like Prince Bismarck who, I think, will rise again.

Prince Adolphus, the son of the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg, is, as I dare say you know, about to be married. The Queen writes to-day that H.M. proposes to send him the Grand Cross of the Bath for a wedding present. . . .

Sir Stafford Northcote's daughter is going to be married. But what care you about that? I do; for I have got to go to the wedding; but as I don't know the young lady I fancy a wedding present is hardly necessary—but I am not sure: people are very unreasonable in these days.

My messenger won't let me write any more.

Adieu, dear Darling,

B

The news from the Continent for the next few days left things much as they were. "I think we shall manage to have peace," was all he could say on the 5th when writing to Lady Chesterfield, "but the Turks are troublesome. I wish Sir Henry Elliot was at Constantinople. He could manage the Divan. The Bismarck crisis remains the same. He insists on resignation and the Emperor on refusing it." In his belief that peace would be maintained he was doomed to disappointment, for on April 21st, Russia declared war against Turkey. But his two last letters to Lady Bradford before he returned to London at the end of the Easter recess were written in a strain of moderate hopefulness—at any rate so far as his own health was concerned:

Hughenden Manor,
April 9th, 1877

I was obliged to you for your agreeable letter this morning; but can make no fitting return. I have seen nobody and have no news and I know you care for nothing else, which reduces correspondence to about the degree of "our own correspondent"—paragraphs of chitter chatter which may be accumulated in a month, or less, but cannot be produced daily—at least not by your humble correspondent. Nevertheless, I can't refrain from sending you a word of gentle thoughts before you leave Egerton Lodge, and express a hope you will soon be in London.

I shall be there on Wednesday for a Cabinet and remain. The change of air has entirely relieved me of my cough which had harassed me, more or less, for 3 months; but my eyes trouble me much and I think may render my retirement from society a necessity. Whether I can go on steering the ship I hardly know; but I may be turned out of office, which will solve that difficulty. If presentable I ought to dine at the Hardys' on the 25th.

Yours ever,

B

Hughenden Manor,
April 10th, 1877

I will send you a line to welcome you to Weston. It must be a great relief after the family horde at Belvoir and meeting almost the same people at Egerton. I go to town to-morrow myself and to remain—but I return not to find you. After three weeks Easter recess and the rare occasions on which we have met from my illness during this year, this is most vexatious!

After much controversy the Queen's birthday is not allowed to disturb Whitsun week. It was barbarous, but our Lord Chamberlain seems to have no tact in these matters. He did it once before when you were here, and we were all obliged to go up to town. The Prince of Wales seems to be himself again. He has called on Duchess Anne, the Ritualist, who last year was a Cameronian—and he has written to hope that I will call on him to-morrow afternoon, as he probably will depart the next day.

Public affairs appear to be in a regular quandary, but I don't despair of getting the thing right. What we want is a man of the necessary experience and commanding mind at this moment at Constantinople—and not one too scrupulous. But such men are rare everywhere and are not to be found at Stamboul, in spite of all the races the Grand Signor has to deal with.

The Bismarck business is not settled, as the world thinks. He is self, and strong, willed, and I rather incline to think he will ultimately kick over the traces.

Yours ever,

B

CHAPTER VIII

April–August 1877

"DAYS OF GREAT EVENTS"

As was invariably the case after an absence in the country, the Prime Minister found himself on his return to London immersed in work and overwhelmed with engagements of all sorts. To the more usual duties of the head of the Government was now added the obligation of sitting for his portrait:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
Thursday morning, April 12th, 1877

I have just got your dear letter which is most agreeable to me. In the fierce storm of life one is grateful for the soothing sympathy of one gentle spirit.

I have so busy a day before me that I write the moment I am up, my only chance. My medico comes at 11, at 12 I am to be at Buckingham Palace for my first sitting to Von Angeli, who has a studio fitted up there for the occasion. I shall try to go every day at 12. It is—to repeat what I said 10 lines ago—my only chance. At three I have to receive a terrible deputation about Scotch Education and at four Mr. Layard will have his audience, which will take up my time till House of Lords.

Monty and I came up yesterday; a long Cabinet and then I had to go to the Prince of Wales. I found him looking very well and in good heart though his sufferings have been great, as bad as having a limb off. He has the happy faculty of rallying. He means to be back early next month, and to dine with me on the Queen's birthday, and asked permission to bring his brother-in-law, the Crown Prince of Denmark, who will then be on a visit to him. Where shall we all be on the Queen's birthday? I don't much care; but I don't take so dark a view of affairs as most around me.

My greatest care is that I never see you and have scarcely seen you the whole year. I hope Bradford is better. My cough, which plagued me so much and so long, has entirely vanished: but I can't say as much for other things. My weakness is great and getting, I fear, chronic.

Yours ever,

B

To Lady Chesterfield

2 Whitehall Gardens,
April 14th, 1877

Dear Darling!

Very busy—very, very. I am obliged to write to you when I get up, for I should not be able to find a moment during the day. Now I am going to the Palace for my 3rd Seance: then a Cabinet, and after that business without end. Whether it be Peace or War, England will command the situation notwithstanding the captious brawling of the Opposition.

The Artist's (Von Angeli) studio at Buckingham Palace is the Queen's private dining room, fitted up with all the Pagoda furniture that was brought from Brighton. Our meetings there would make up a good Genre picture: the fantastic apartment, the artist himself, very good-looking and a genius, the Primo in his Crimson chair on a stage and the Private Secretary (Monty) reading the Despatches to me; for we work all the time and Von Angeli wishes us to do so.

I am unhappy about your appetite. I am taking a slight tonic being below par.

Your affectionate

B

To Lady Bradford

10 Downing Street,
April 14th, 1877

My third seance to Von Angeli this morning. It is said to be a great success. And then a Cabinet which is just over. And in a few minutes the head of the Engineer officers whom I sent to Constantinople nearly a year ago, will be with me with maps, and plans, and estimates, and all sorts of things which, perhaps, will never be wanted; for it is very clear that Russia does not like the war at all, which she has brought about by her own intrigues and miscalculated swagger.

Last night the great Whig Reconnaissance ended very disastrously for its concocters. The House of Commons was crammed full; Harty-Tarty did very well; but Hardy blew the whole thing out of water like a torpedo! Harcourt, who had got up the whole scheme, rose to answer him with an immense speech and endless papers; but was so mortified by everybody rushing to dinner, except the habitual bores who never dine—at least at late hours—that he broke down quite demoralised. And the debate never rallied except when Roebuck fired a well-aimed and destructive shot. We are to have the same farce in the House of Lords on Monday if Granville still has stomach for it . . .

10 Downing Street,
April 17, 1877

Never was I so busy as at this moment and I am not at all sure that I shall be able even to finish this little note. And yet when time is so valuable and affairs so pressing, how very annoying to have to go to a wedding this morning and all that—and yet that has been my fate! It was inevitable—even Derby was obliged to go and "Mary Derby." The Chancellor of the Exchequer's daughter to a younger son of McLeod of McLeod—Westminster Abbey—high ritualistic music—Princess Mary, the Louise Lornes, and about two or three hundred obscure and ill-favored relations—and all this for a girl married to the pauper son of a pauper Papa! Too absurd and too annoying!

When shall you come up—if ever? Saw Bradford last night. The great debate in the Lords collapsed. Granville made a speech which entered on no great questions of policy, but was a tissue of verbal criticism and petty points. Derby who, to my pleased surprise, is a first-rate debater in the House of Lords, which he never was in the House of Commons, answered him on every point so completely, that it was impossible to sustain the debate, which after some ordinary remarks of Lord Lansdowne and some nonsense from that maniac Dudley, like the Rhine, never reached the sea but vanished in the mud.

To pressure of work was now added a return of gout in the hand, with the result that Lord Beaconsfield's letters became less frequent and less informing:

To Lady Chesterfield

2 Whitehall Gardens,
April 29th, 1877

Dear Darling,

. . . I tried to send you yesterday a few hasty lines. Affairs are very troubled and dark. To-morrow I go to Windsor and on Tuesday the Queen comes up and stays here till Friday. These are not times when she ought to be in Scotland, and yet I fear she will soon repair there. The Prince of Wales is to return in the middle of the night, or at break of dawn, on the 7th May, so that he may hold his promised levee at 2 o'clock on the same day. He is a delightful person, but I wish he would remember he is not immortal and no longer in rude health. The Duke of Edinburgh is ordered to join the fleet and will soon be again at Besika Bay.

Gladstone and the real leaders of the Whigs seem at length to have separated, and he is going to take his own line and move a vote of censure on the Government, which they will not support. I am not afraid of his Motions and believe he loses every day weight with the country, but the mischief he has done is incalculable.

Yours affect.

B

Tell me how you are.

The threatened vote of censure on the Government for their Near Eastern policy was duly moved by Gladstone on May 7th; and the Motion together with an amendment moved by Sir H. Drummond Wolff to the effect that the House declined to entertain any resolution which might embarrass the Government in maintaining peace and protecting British interests, was debated on five separate days. The division on May 14th gave the Government a majority of 131, and on the 15th Beaconsfield told Lady Bradford that this defeat of the Opposition had finished the Session "so far as party struggles are involved." Three days later he hurried to Hughenden:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
10 o'clock, May 18th, 1877

I also am off at cock-crow, *alias* in an hour's time, and have a great deal to do—to write to the Faery at great length giving her some account of last night in the House of Lords and explaining why I don't go down this morning, or wait to see the Duchess of Edinburgh; but I can't—I must have change of air—my bronchial sufferings are recommencing and I have still only half a hand. . . .

Ever yours,

B

His flight from London coincided with fresh troubles on the Continent. "There is little repose with France and Turkey both in a state of terrible confusion," he complained to Lady Bradford on May 18th. "I can tell you nothing about the first except that it seems to me to be the Marshal's second march to Sedan. . . ." By a dramatic stroke which was described at the time as—"almost as much a *coup d'état* on the part of the President as if he had gone down to the Chamber with a file of soldiers and turned the majority out of doors," Marshal MacMahon had dismissed his Premier M. Jules Simon and had substituted for a popular and Parliamentary Ministry one that was extra-Parliamentary and anti-republican. He had thus set in motion a train of events which, before the year was out, was to end in his own discomfiture. At a later date Lord Beaconsfield had something more to say upon the subject;[1] for the present he was preoccupied with the state of his own health, for with bronchitis added to gout he found himself an unwilling prisoner held in solitary confinement in the house:

To Lady Chesterfield

Hughenden Manor,
May 22nd, 1877

Dearest, dear friend,

I was glad to see your handwriting and know you were surrounded by agreeable companions. I should not have added by my presence to your pleasure—being very unwell and fit only for the complete solitude in which I live. I have not even a Secretary with me, or I would not perplex you with these uncouth characters; but I have a relapse in my hand (my right hand). I can't get the gout out of it and am obliged to use it a little—and a little is too much.

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[1] See below, p. 186.

The weather is very much against me—having bronchitis, I cannot go out and meet the northern or north-eastern blast—preceded here by thunderstorms and water spouts. Lord Coventry is the successor of poor Shrewsbury as Captain of Gentlemen at Arms. We must wait for foreign news—at least of moment. I ought not to send you this stupid letter, but I send it with the love of

B

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
May 23rd, 1877

I must be very vain—and yet I sometimes hope vanity is not my greatest weakness—to think you will prefer this dreary letter to absolute silence. "So," as Byron says, "here goes." I have not been out of my walls since my arrival, the sky being Indian ink and the blast N. East—and I "not left alone, but with those gentle friends the gout and stone," for which read gout and bronchitis. You are not as forlorn, as you have your pleasant family about you, and dear Ida and "the little chap," whom I should be very pleased to romp with a little. I see the odds on Redoubt are only 10 to 1—so I have hope. I trust he'll win, as I know it will give my good Bradford real pleasure.

Sir H. Elliot is afraid it is too late for the rising in the Caucasus to come to much; but Sir Henry is not a sanguine man. Colonel Stokes considers a well organised movement there will make the work contemplated by the Russians in Asia Minor a two years' job instead of one. I think there is no doubt the French business is a conspiracy. They have managed to keep de Cazes, to throw a little dust in the public eye; but de Cazes will do anything—for a consideration.

Strange, that almost while I was reading what you wrote, and wrote so sweetly about poor Lady Shrewsbury, I received the enclosed from her. It is not very legible and I have not made it all out. I ought not to criticise her characters, for I can scarcely read my own, between a bad pen and gout. Ah! When one has got everything in the world one ever wished for and is prostrate with pain or debility, one knows the value of health, which one never could comprehend in the days of youth and love.

Yours,

B

Matters moved slowly. "I really could not write to you yesterday," he told Lady Bradford on the 27th, "though I had much wished to do so; but I was prostrate after five weeks of my left hand and my right hand not yet by any means cured." Worse was to come, for he was now attacked in the left foot also. "What I'm to do about my birthday dinner I can't conceive. I have got the Emperor of Brazil, I believe, to dine with me, and have to write to ask the Faery's permission to wear the Brazilian Garter, which, perhaps you remember, His Royal Majesty gave to me during his last visit." And in a letter to Lady Chesterfield on the 28th he wrote—"It pained me not to write to you yesterday, but it was impossible. . . . I have been quite alone all this time—now ten days. I have not even seen my clergyman, for I can't crawl to church, suffering now in my foot as well as hand." He returned to London at the end of May; but for the next fortnight wrote only one or two short notes of a purely personal character. On June 13th, however, he returned to the Eastern Question and communicated to Lady Bradford Midhat Pasha's own exposition of the object and significance of the Midhat Constitution which was the outcome of the Constantinople Conference. Whether or not Lord Beaconsfield agreed with Midhat Pasha's estimate of the value of the Constitution he did not say:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
June 13th, 1877

. . . Midhat Pasha had his interview this morning. He has not "the presence" which Queen Elizabeth and Queen Victoria require in public men. His nose is red; his beard and hair grey; and he wears spectacles. But he impresses you with a sense of energy and determination and of being quite ruthless. He said the population of Stamboul was corrupt and worn out, but that in the provinces the Turkish character is still found and abounds; simplicity, honesty, truth, patriotism; and that is the use of his Parliament; it has brought all these virtues up to town and he still not only hopes, but believes, they may save the Empire. He seemed very doubtful about the Bulgarians passing the Danube. He says the Turks have exactly doubled the amount of forces they had on the river in 1854; that they are better armed and have a flotilla on the river and the command of the sea.

June 14th, 1877

After I had written to you I paid a second visit to the same lady[2] and completed my reconnaissance. It was a very ticklish affair as I had to learn a good deal and tell nothing—for you can tell nothing in that quarter with safety. And all the time I did not know what she really did know; so it was like feeling for torpedoes during the whole passage, but I was not blown up!

. . . Monty came up yesterday but I had not the heart to keep him here to-day; but he really is wanted every minute. I have confidence in Mr. Turnor; but it is not advisable without great necessity to increase the area of extreme confidence. Mr. T. has become acquainted with some things which made him stare. . . .

The Faery writes every day and telegraphs every hour. This is almost literally the case. She will arrive at Windsor on the 22nd and I am to meet her there. A great many things may happen before then. . . .

Before his visit to Windsor he attended a banquet of which he gave Lady Bradford a characteristic description:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
June 22nd, 1877

The House of Lords sate so late yesterday afternoon that I was disappointed in not seeing you, and could hardly get in time for the colossal American banquet—too terrible—the heat of Hades—40 guests in a bower of stephanotis the breath of which, blended after dinner with the fumes of tobacco, completely upset my bronchial tubes, not in a very strong state at present; and I was quite unable to manage Grosvenor House where I had hoped to tell you of some of my doings—at any rate to have received some sympathy for my sufferings. I am now going to Windsor, but have a hope that I may receive a line from you before my departure.

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[2] Lady Derby.

Yours ever,

B

His letters for the next two or three weeks were likewise concerned with social rather than with political doings:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
June 25th, 1877

We always seem to be at cross purposes. I came yesterday to be amused and interested—and certainly I was the latter, or I should not have presumed to inflict my presence on you for nearly two hours.

This is a hurried scratch, as your servant did not wait and I fear you may have departed on your mysterious expedition. Lady Holland has sent me a note very properly beginning "dearest of men!" and asking me to dine there on the 30th to meet the Emperor and Empress of Brazil. She is going to ask you. I am prevented by that infernal engagement of five weeks' standing which has been a social stumbling block to me, as I knew it would, ever since. But I hope you will be able to go, for you will be amused; but you must not sit near the Emperor for he never changes his black cravat, or, I fancy, any other part of his dress. He gets up so early and does so much. Your early risers are generally rather dull at dinner time. I have found that out . . .

Granville, Harcourt, and all the strawberry gang were very intrigued about the Windsor visit and the subsequent Cabinet "in consequence." Skelmersdale told them it was Woburn that made a Friday Cabinet necessary. Rather good! My bulletin is not good—but there is so much to do we must not talk of such matters.

Yours ever,

B

2 Whitehall Gardens,
Sunday, July 1st, 1877

. . . Gull is all froth and words. What you heard he also said to me yesterday; he was evidently perplexed and disappointed and came twice. They are all alike. First of all they throw it on the weather: then there must be a change of scene. So Sir W. Jenner after blundering and plundering in the usual way sent me to Bournemouth, and Gull wants to send me to Ems. I should like to send them both to Jericho . . . The only good thing in all these troubles is that I am to drink port wine. After 3 years of plebeian tipples this amuses me. What scribble and scrawl; but I cannot help it.

Yours ever,

B

"I see Gull every day who continues to hold most favorable opinions of my cure," he wrote on the 12th, "and every day I get worse." On the 14th he wrote Lady Chesterfield some pertinent comments on the art of entertaining prompted by a dinner which he had not enjoyed—"An Englishman, incapable otherwise of a shabby action, will nevertheless order inferior claret at dinner which is the only time at which a real gentleman drinks wine." Not all Englishmen, however, were indifferent to the importance of providing good wine with good food:

> At Lord Northbrook's last Tuesday the table claret was of the highest class; but then he is a Baring and the sons of princely merchants look upon bad wine as a damnable heresy. The Prince and Princess of Wales dined there but did not arrive until a quarter past nine!! Too soon for supper; too late for the sublime meal.

In the House of Commons a storm had suddenly arisen over the appointment by the Prime Minister of a civil servant of the name of Pigott[3] to the Comptrollership of the Stationery Office, the suggestion made being that the post had been conferred as a reward to Mr. Pigott's family for personal and political services to him. On a snap division a Motion which was equivalent to a vote of censure on Beaconsfield himself was carried by a small majority. The incident provided him with one of those opportunities in which he delighted and excelled, of pricking, in the House of Lords, with theatrical gestures and dramatic effect, the insubstantial bubble—for it was no more—and of securing in the House of Commons a sensational triumph:

> There has been a meeting of the Speaker, the Chancellor

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[3] Afterwards Sir Digby Pigott.

of the Exchequer and Hartington and they have come to a unanimous conclusion that steps must be immediately taken to rescind the Resolution of the House of Commons. It takes a great deal to elate me; but I confess I am not insensible to such a triumph!

An invitation, on the anniversary of a similar engagement four years before, induced reflections of a mournful nature —"Gussie has asked me to dine there on Sunday to meet you. It is exactly four years ago—the Sunday before Goodwood—that I met you dining at that very house. I should like much to have celebrated that anniversary, though anniversaries are not much to my taste; but it cannot be." And two days later, on July 28th, he wrote—"Not a moment, and yet it is a farewell! How terrible it should be so perfunctory. I think of other ones—and sigh . . . Four years ago! It makes one very sad. I gave you feelings you could not return. It was not your fault; my fate and my misfortune."

From London he was summoned to Osborne and wrote from there still under the spell of tender memories—"Yesterday almost the moment I arrived, I had to plant a tree—a pinsapo . . . I have a Cabinet to-morrow at three o'clock, and shall hardly get in time for it. About the moment, you will be on your departure to Goodwood. Happy Goodwood! to have you. You will find many gay companions there and many admirers. Try to remember one who is not very gay and hopes sometimes still to be—yours ever, B." On August 1st he recurred to public matters in a letter to Lady Chesterfield:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
August 1st, 1877

Dear Darling,

They say there has been a great battle in Bulgaria and that the Russians have been literally *ecraséed* by Osman Pasha. They talk of 24,000 Russians *hors de combat!* This first appeared in a 2nd edition of *Telegraph*—but we have a telegram from Mr. Layard confirming the news on the authority of the Porte. So far, it may be said, it is only a Turkish account; but it is believed, and by good judges.

In the House of Commons nearly as great a victory has been achieved. An unbroken sitting of 26 hours! The triumph of English gentlemen and British pluck. It has saved and vindicated parliamentary government.

Adieu, dearest friend—I can't write to you as I wished and as I had intended, the pressure of affairs is so great.

Yours affect.,

B

And on the same date he informed Lady Bradford, with obvious satisfaction, of an unusual and gratifying incident—"I made my first visit to the House of Commons this morning since I quitted its benches—my first visit after I had sate there nearly forty years and had led—on one side or the other—more than a quarter of a century. When they recognised me in the gallery both sides gave me a cheer!" Further news came in from Turkey—"The Turkish victory is the only subject of talk," he wrote on the 2nd; and from the House of Lords on the 6th:

A hurried line. Your letter this morning was consolatory to one who requires solace . . . Yesterday at 6.40 arrived Fred Wellesley from the Bulgarian Head-quarters and came on at once to me, Lord Derby being out of town. I have had a terribly busy day, Lord Lyons being over here on leave—and with him a long interview. Yesterday we had 3 boxes and 5 telegrams (two of them cyphered) from Osborne. . . .

On August 8th he had a similar story to tell:

Her letters are a great solace to him and she must not grudge them, although he may not always reply. But he is worked to death and sees no prospect of cessation in this respect. But these are days of great events, the greatest since the first French revolution, and one ought to be content to live in such—still more to take part in their management and settlement. . . . I could not make out who your Secretary of Treasury could be—"Member for Birmingham." Why it must be your favorite Chamberlain. The new Lord is, as I told you would probably be the case when you were at Goodwood, Mr. Secretary of the Treasury Smith. The announcement was received to-day with great cheering on both sides of the House of Commons. No other appointment yet made. Lord Lyons came to me this morn from Osborne and F. Wellesley left me this morn for Osborne; and boxes come from that favored isle every hour and telegrams every moment. Monty is worked to death—he is over-cyphered.

In his letter of August 10th, Beaconsfield makes use—for the first time in his correspondence with Lady Bradford—of the word asthma.[4] He had been dining out—"I took down Princess Mary, who requires room, and being in a part of the table that was over-packed, I suffered greatly. I was obliged to go home rather early as I wanted to cough, which one can't do in the presence of royalty . . . I have got to dine at Kensington Palace on Sunday if I have breath enough in my body; but I doubt my going with the horrors of asthma." The two things, indeed, with which he was mainly concerned at the moment were his health and the possibility of the Bulgarians having been checked in their advance against the Turks:

August 11th, 1877

I think the Bulgarians will not be able to do their work in one campaign, and many things may happen before they commence their second . . . The German giant, just returned from Gastein, called on me this morn. He had been with the Emperor but had not seen Bismarck. The Emperor, who is a soldier, laughs with astonishment at the blunders of the Bulgarian Generals, and evidently thinks they are a little in the mud. Their plan is to clear Bulgaria of the Turks and make it the Bulgarian winter quarters. There must be a good deal of fighting and more disease before that happens.

August 13th, 1877

I can't give a good account of myself. I cannot breathe and have no sleep. Last night was the worst I have yet had. I was up all night sitting in an arm-chair and leaning over the back of another one. Sir William Gull has just left me and confesses he has failed in his remedies . . . The Bulgarians have retired, I really believe, from the Shipka Pass.

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[4] He had, however, used language which suggested that he was suffering from asthma, in his letter to Lady Chesterfield of October 28th, 1874.

Lady Bradford had gone to her small retreat at Windermere, and Lord Beaconsfield's two last letters before he himself retired to Hughenden, were written to her there:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
August 15th, 1877

Is it fair to send these stupid lines? Mlle. de Longueville said that love without letters was the love of a *femme de chambre,* and insisted on having a letter every day from the Duke of Rochefoucauld. But you live in such a small house now that there is no room, I am sure, for my epistles. You gave me a bedroom I remember; but I was obliged to deprive you of your *salle à manger* for my boxes, and they were always hustled away in great confusion just in time to let the *entrées* enter. And, now, you have a Court for your guest! Do they bring equerries and ladies in waiting? And if so, do you and Bradford put up at that pretty lakeside inn I remember and where I wish to be now?

I could not go to Holland House yesterday and to-day I have been obliged to throw over the unfortunate Alfred Montgomery, who once threw us over, but it was not for revenge. I really was, and am, too ill—and dread my journey to-morrow, though change of air, in any form and by any means, is to be welcomed.

The account of the young Prince is more favorable to-day, though I fear there is ground for great anxiety, and I know it is felt in high quarters. It is sad that the Duchess of Cambridge should be spared and a youth of 12 years be demanded by grim fate. I always feel, though I should like to live longer, that I have had my innings, or, to be a little more classical, might say with Augustus, at the last moment, "Plaudite!"

If we can only prevent the Russians from attacking Turkey through Servia, which I think we shall, Moscow will not be able to manage the affair in one campaign, and then we shall have time and opportunity—which are two good things. Without the first I should not be able to send you these lines and were we not separated you could not receive them. That should console.

Yours ever,

B

Osborne,
August 17th, 1877

We came here yesterday morning very nicely . . . The Queen has made the acquaintance of Charles Beresford, Captain of the mighty *Thunderer,* and is highly amused by him. He was one of the young gentlemen whom I had to lecture before they accompanied the Prince to India—and now I doubt not, he will be an honored guest at this royal table. There is no news from the seat of war or from abroad generally, and I should not be surprised if there were a lull for a fortnight or so. I expect to get to Hughenden to-morrow and if that fails in relieving me shall get to Brighton.

. . . I have been very busy all this day writing almost without ceasing, and when you see the mud which they call ink I have to work with, you will not be surprised that I am out of temper.

CHAPTER IX

August–December 1877

TURKISH VICTORIES?

The autumn and closing weeks of the year 1877 weighed heavily upon the Prime Minister. His physical suffering increased to such an extent that he spoke seriously in his letters to Lady Bradford of his inclination to resign, and so relieve his overweighted shoulders of the burden of public life. To physical suffering was added growing anxiety at the trend of events abroad. His guidance of the Foreign Policy of the country had not been successful in averting war in the Near East. Russia was at grips with Turkey; and since war had not been staved off, it was important in the interests of the policy to which he was committed that the resistance of Turkish arms should be successful. Hence the anxiety with which day by day he scanned the news from the seat of war, striving to persuade himself of the truth of the frequent rumours which reached him of Turkish victories, but driven slowly but inexorably to the unpalatable conclusion that in so far as victory might be claimed by either side, it was by the Russians rather than by the Turks. With the march of events bringing the possibility of active intervention by Great Britain nearer, he found himself faced once more by grave differences in the Cabinet which before the end of the year had become so marked as to threaten to rend the Government. Increasing depression, broken only occasionally by flashes of vivacity, is plainly apparent in his letters:

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
August 20th, 1877

Your letter just arrived and very unexpected. I have few pleasures and a letter from you is my greatest. Our Sunday was not rainy. The clouds exhausted themselves in the night; so I went to Church. I wish your Princess[1] had. Our sermon was not like yours—it was long, silly, and sadly wearisome. My Vicar, who is "bad enough" was away; but his deputy made me regret his absence. Thirty-five minutes, extemporary and highly ritualistic, so that when he ascended and descended the pulpit he bowed to the Altar. In the Scotch Church, opposed in everything to the Ultramontane English, they also extemporise; but then they get their sermons by heart—and though often deficient in taste they are rarely like the unconsidered repetitions we had yesterday.

The visit to Osborne was on the whole agreeable. Our Sovereign hostess tried to make it so, but though I was much with her, I was very ill and could scarcely get through it. She tried to extract from me a promise "to see Sir W. G."; but I was still strong enough in mind and body to reject that. I sate next to my great friend at dinner and she was really most agreeable; Monty next to Princess

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[1] Princess Christian, who was the guest of Lord and Lady Bradford at St. Catherine's in Westmorland.

Beatrice whom he seems to charm. I never knew her so excited, and once or twice I was a little afraid; but I watched the countenance of the High and Mighty, and it was always serene or smiling. . . .

Yours,

B

Hughenden Manor,
August 21st, 1877

I got your letter this morning. Your panegyric of "dear Monty, who will never leave me" was not very fortunate, for he departed this morning at 7 o'clock for a week—for Melbury. . . . So, here I am, really and absolutely quite alone, and if it were not for the cyphered telegrams I can't say I should dislike it. . . .

Nothing comes from the seat of war, for which, I believe, I had prepared you; and probably nothing will happen for some time. The state of the Russian army is, I credibly hear, horrible and I don't well see how they can get out of the mess. There never was a war of such destruction; but it seems to me impossible to alleviate the sufferers with India in the awful condition we now find it.[2] India requires all our aid and all our sympathy.

Yours ever,

B

To Lady Chesterfield

Hughenden Manor,
August 27th, 1877

I am surprised that Selina should find my letters amusing —"entertaining." I don't find them so myself. Solitude and illness do not furnish much material for correspondence and every letter I write is to me a great, and often a painful effort. . . .

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[2] On account of famine.

I think the Turks are fighting well, but as long as the Shipka Pass is in the hands of the Christian barbarians the Porte is never safe—and it does not seem as yet to be retaken. The Pasha who surrendered it without a blow, was one of those bribed by Ignatieff.

Adieu, dear Darling,

B

"I am not a bit better than when I saw you last," he told Lady Chesterfield on September 1st, "but I take no remedies and have great repose without which my fragile thread would soon snap. Rest is my only chance." He was very tired; but news had come in of a Turkish success and this at least must be passed on to Lady Bradford without delay—"The Turks have gained a great victory. The Russians have lost 4,000, and powerful positions. The Turks 300; not 3,000, as the *Times* says. I have been writing all day so my hand cannot go on, and I have three messengers who must be finished off." He found it difficult, indeed, to get Russia and Turkey off his mind:

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
September 4th, 1877

This will find you at Longshawe where I trust you will be happy, notwithstanding all the nonsense you will hear from Granby about Russia. I bear it because I regard him as my early colleague in interesting and difficult times, and because I always remember, when he is expressing absurd opinions about politics, that he believes in the Claimant![3]

I have been treating my chest complaint on a new system and though I had little hope, I really begin to believe I may yet get right. This last day or two I have experienced a considerable change for the better—as, indeed, all change must be. . . .

The Turks go on fighting and well—but query whether well enough? I am afraid of large re-inforcements and the Shipka Pass.

Yours ever,

B

Hughenden Manor,
September 6th, 1877

Your letter from Longshawe has just arrived and it gives me much pleasure. It is so long since we have met that I sometimes feel the past is a dream and that I am alone in the world, without any human sympathy except on State affairs. . . .

I heard from Mr. Layard to-day. His date is Aug. 29 and much has happened, and is perhaps happening, since then. He seems to have completely re-established our influence at Constantinople and to have entirely gained the Sultan's confidence, whom he continually represents to me as one of the most amiable men he ever knew; with nothing but good impulses. One result of the influence of Mr. Layard is that he has got rid of all the Ministers who were jealous of foreigners and so deprived the Sultan of the services of many distinguished English officers, now all employed; Baker Pasha among others. Do not mention this letter of Mr. Layard, as ours is a "secret" correspondence. . . .

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[3] The Tichborne claimant.

Yours ever,

B

Beaconsfield's new system of treatment, which he described in a letter to Lady Chesterfield on September 8th, involved his "drinking old port wine." The effect on his chest complaint was good. Whether or not it would serve him as well in other respects seemed doubtful—"I dare say it will bring me in the end a sharp fit of the gout"; but he had not time to linger on such speculations, for he must justify his support of Turkey—"The war continues to be involved in great mystery. Nothing would surprise me; but at any rate the Turks have proved their vigour and resources and that they have a right to be regarded among the Sovereign Powers of the World." But had they really proved these things? The persistence with which the lonely man brooding in solitude in the library at Hughenden reiterated his belief, suggests that doubt was beginning to creep in. And doubt on such a question was a perpetual torment. A reflection of his mental state is to be seen in the irritability which he too often betrayed in the tone of his letters, and in the varying moods of elation and disgust which he displayed. "I have not a moment—literally," he wrote in his letter of September 8th to Lady Bradford; "but perhaps it is better to send you this line to meet you under your new roof than not to write at all. Though why my letters in solitude to one I never see and one whom I never at the best can much see, should be a consolation to myself or any charm to you, is often a metaphysical conundrum I cannot solve." For the next few days his letters were full of war news:

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
September 10th, 1877

I write to you in the midst of a great battle which has lasted three days, and which is now raging. I have not had a telegram of anything that took place to-day: indeed barely possible.

On Thursday Osman Pasha telegraphed to the Sultan that the loss of Lofteka did not in the slightest degree affect his position, and that he felt perfectly confident he should defeat the Russians at Plevna. If he do, they will re-cross the Danube, which, I fear, will make your cousin of Rutland weep. It is nervous work and there is much still more anxious going on; but I get better every day thanks to acting contrary to all my medical advisers have recommended, and find in old port perpetual youth. I hoped to hear that Bradford has won the [at?] Derby. I suppose Zucchero belongs to him; but he never tells me anything or puts me on anything!

Monty has gone to town about Indian Famine.

Yours ever,

B

To Lady Chesterfield

Hughenden Manor,
September 13th, 1877

I am very busy, dear Darling, this morning, but I must thank you for all your kindness, though I hope I should have sent a line even if I had not received venison, which I am sure will be delightful.

All the paragraphs in the newspapers about Russian successes, which please Lady A. and her friends so much, are Stock-jobbing forgeries. The fact is, the Russians have a hard nut to crack and I shall not be surprised if it yet broke their teeth. One should never prophesy, but I can't help fancying that many things may happen before the Plevna struggle is over.

The Queen has gone to a most out of the way place in the highlands of Ross-shire where nobody ever went before, and she has taken a country Inn for a week. It is fortunately isolated, and she has had a telegraph wire fixed to it. The place is called Talladale—not Tallyho.

Bradford was nearly covered with glory. The Indian Government have presented me with the colossal gold medal which at the Imperial Proclamation, was presented to the Indian Sovereign.

Yours ever,

B.

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
September 14th, 1877

I can only just write a line, but I hope it may catch you before you depart.

The Russians lost 10,000 men in their assault yesterday and did not make much of it. I hear they will not, probably cannot, afford another assault and that there is to be a regular siege—sapping and mining. This is folly, for somehow or other the other Turkish armies must reach the scene before that is over. Burnaby was never at the European seat of war: he went to Asia. And having visited all the chief camps and places, reported to us that in three weeks' time from the commencement of the war, the Turks would be nowhere. He gave this as a certainty—not as a speculation—and now the Turks are about to invade. The Sultan at last has got some money and the Porte is quite lively. He has sent some to Mouchtar Pasha in Asia, who has been begging for a few paras for months.

I am glad Bradford got a race, and a tolerable one. Next year, I think, he will be ripe enough to make all our fortunes.

Adieu,

B

To Lady Chesterfield

Hughenden Manor,
September 15th, 1877

Dear Darling,

I don't think I can tell you anything about your friends the Turks, which you don't already know. They telegraphed to us from the field of battle that the day had been glorious, that three Russian attacks had been repulsed with the loss of ten thousand men—and that the Emperor had quitted the field very disconsolate. Of course we were as astonished as the Emperor himself, to find that after sunset the great redoubt was captured. And how it was, I have not the slightest idea at this moment. I should suppose a surprise by night, or late twilight. The Turks are unlike all other people and you can't calculate or bet about them. I dare say they were saying their prayers and smoking. But Osman Pasha is still alive, though he seems never to have got any siege guns from Widden, where I am told they have them by 100's! It is a curious people, but they have proved that Ottoman independence and integrity are not dreams.

Yours ever,

B

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
September 16th, 1877

Accounts (our own, *quite authentic*) tell us that the Russians lost 15,000 men in the three days: this is half the amount of their expected re-inforcements! This does not include the battle of Dufnile, fought subsequently, of which the details have not arrived; but where we have reason to believe that Osman utterly destroyed the Rumanian rascals, putting 7,000 of them *hors de combat* and taking nine cannon.

There is also a rumor, not discredited, that Suleiman has mastered the enemy in the Shipka Pass, but this has not yet officially reached the Government. The amount of the Russian loss comes from their own Head Quarters but that *you must say nothing about.*

Yours ever,

B

To Beaconsfield's intense disgust he discovered that his enthusiasm for the Turks was not shared by Lady Bradford, and stung by this discovery he wrote bitterly of what he characterised as her duplicity:

Hughenden Manor,
September 18th, 1877

The Duke of Norfolk is to marry Lady Flora Hastings; so her papa formally apprised me to-day. I only write, now, because I think this will interest you. I do not trouble you with news from the seat of war, and I am very sorry that, unsuspiciously, I ever did trouble you therewith, as I hear you are so uncompromising a Russian. I am sorry for that, but much more grieved that you concealed it from me, which indicates that insincerity with which you have, more than once, painfully impressed me. I often ask myself what single point of sympathy there is between us? Certainly not in literature, but I was sometimes under a hesitating delusion that my political [career?] might interest you, beyond the narrow limit of places and appointments.

Lord Lyons has just telegraphed that he is coming down here to-day. We have not a servant in the house, all being engaged in a grand cricket match in the park with a neighboring parish. It is impossible to disturb them. We are at our wit's end.

B

Lady Bradford not unnaturally resented the charge, and two days later Beaconsfield wrote a qualified apology:

Hughenden Manor,
September 20th, 1877

I was sorry, after it was sent, that I wrote you a letter which you thought so unjust, because I felt then, and feel now, that one ought never to suppress one's feelings. But my weakness is my heart, a weakness which I suppose I ought long ago to have outlived. The world, they say, goes well with me; but the only real happiness, to my mind, is that which springs from the affections, and if the person I most love is false, or deficient to me in thought or feeling, I experience sufferings which neither Bismarck, nor Gortchakoff, could inflict on me.

B

Before the end of September there was more conflicting news from the war zone to bewilder him. "I have no official news of the great battle which was fought at Bicla yesterday and the defeat of the Tsarevitch," he told Lady Bradford on the 22nd. "But as the telegram of the *Daily News* is from Schumla which is close to the battlefield and is from their own correspondent, it sounds like truth." It was, indeed, difficult to know what to believe:

To Lady Chesterfield

Hughenden Manor,
September 24th, 1877

Dear Darling,

I never was so mystified in my life as about this battle. Originally, had the date been "Pera," I should not have considered much of it; but "Schumla" is so near the scene of action that I could hardly suspect any mistake, and I remembered also that the *Daily Telegraph* had the news of the first great battle of Plevna, and nobody believed it. Then again, there were other accounts which though differing in detail, all agreed in there having been a battle and in favor of the Turks. Yesterday afternoon, I received this telegram from Mr. Layard, "Mehomet Ali Pasha officially confirms report of battle. 4,000 Russians slain. Double the number wounded." Who could doubt any longer? Though Sunday, I keep the telegraph open, and at once sent you a line. And now, it appears to be all moonshine, or something like it!! I observe, now, Mr. Layard's telegram does not say "victory" but "battle": but the numbers of the Russians slain and wounded, indicated a victory.

Comte Andrassy says that in addition to all our anxieties, we need not trouble ourselves about an approaching Conclave. His Holiness has not the slightest intention to depart this world.

The venison was delicious; very fat, and delicately fat; superb!

Your affectionate

B

A further forty-eight hours brought news which, if true, was certainly encouraging—"No news, except it seems true that Chefket Pasha has reinforced and re-victualed Plevna —a feat of arms worth a victorious battle, and almost incredible with the Russian cavalry of which we heard so much." In view of the uncertainties of the situation, Beaconsfield invited Mr. Gathorn Hardy, Secretary of State for War, to visit him; and as a result of their discussions he took stock of the immediate future in a letter to Lady Bradford:

Hughenden Manor,
September 29th, 1877

The Hardy visit was satisfactory—very. The Cabinet is summoned for Friday next and after that we shall know better where we all are; but I don't think the state of affairs is dark. The only drawback is my health. I really don't see how I can meet Parliament unless some change takes place. It would be impossible for me to address a public assembly. There is no one to consult. Gull in whom I have little confidence is still far away, and Dr. Kidd, whom all my friends wish me to consult and who, of course, like all untried men, is a magician, won't be in town till the middle of October and is such a swell that, I believe, he only receives and does not pay visits—convenient for a Prime Minister! I can't conceive at my time of life miracles can be performed; still one must cling to hope, or rather patience, which, as Horace Walpole says, is a good substitute for hope—when you are 70.

I did very well when I came down here, drank port wine, seemed to get quite strong and get free of all bronchial distress. But after 3 weeks they re-appeared in the aggravated form of asthma and they destroy my nights and make me consequently shattered in the day. I think of going to Brighton, but dread the hardships of hotel life, where they give you only one sitting room, and all your papers are moved even when you eat an egg or a slice of dried toast. I must have a sitting room for myself and they tell me it is not to be got. We live, I know, in more barbarous ages than we imagine, but this seems impossible!

It is at this moment, difficult, almost out of mortal power, to retire from public life: and, so far as Cabinets and correspondence and all that are concerned, one can yet manage, and it all falls, and rightly, on me. But when it comes to speaking in public one must have the physical ability, which I entirely lack—and have no chance of remedy, except sea air, or change of scene, or other commonplaces, in which really I don't in ye least believe.

Adieu! Adieu!

B

On October 5th he wrote—"Cabinet just over; well satisfied with myself, and it need not meet again in a hurry." Comparative harmony had been secured—though temporarily only, as the future was to show. Since Hughenden had failed to effect the improvement in his health which he had hoped for, Lord Beaconsfield now decided to try a change of air, and went to Brighton. "We arrived here on Saturday," he wrote on the 8th; "a fine suite of rooms though a third story. But all the stories are alike, the ascent and descent being managed by a lift—a charming machine; and when I take my place in it either to mount or to fall, I often wish it would never stop." Almost the first acquaintance whom he met was the Russian Ambassador:

Yesterday on the Prado, Schouvaloff rushed up to me full of overflowing affection, but doubtful how he would be received. Of course I returned all his effusion and took his arm (Monty having my other and Deym[4] hanging about Monty). The world seemed astonished by the spectacle and no doubt it has been telegraphed over Europe—and even Asia. Schouvaloff would see me to my hotel door, and asked leave to call on me, etc. etc. Not the slightest allusion was made to public affairs.

The Prime Minister had promised the Duke of Bedford that he would pay him a visit at Woburn Abbey, and on October 16th he fulfilled his promise:

October 21st, 1877

The visit to Woburn was not so irksome as I feared. It was not too long; but I feel every year more that country house visiting is very irksome. It is too conventional. In this case, however, there was business to be done; a conference with Lord Lyons on the eve of his return to Paris where what may happen God, or rather Satan, only knows; and much talk with Lord Odo about Bismarck and his probable doings, who might figure, indeed, as Satan himself. Generally speaking the aspect of affairs is most troubled and gloomy. The defeat of the Turks in Asia Minor, which is a great one, will not mend matters. I take it, however, that there will be a fight now in Bulgaria which I thought might have been avoided, and that may settle something.

Perhaps it was disappointment at the Turkish defeat that gave so gloomy a tone to his next few letters. But whatever the cause he wrote more emphatically than he had ever done of his desire to escape from office:

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[4] Count Deym, the Austrian Ambassador.

To Lady Bradford

Brighton,
October 23rd, 1877

You cannot write to me too often; but you must not regulate your communications with reference to my replies. Sometimes I am very busy which I have been these last few days and sometimes, and I grieve to say generally, I am very ill.

If Government only consisted of Cabinet work, like what Gortchakoff has to deal with and some others, I could manage yet very well; but how I am to face public meetings and address public assemblies in my present miserable state I really know not. And if I could only face the scene which would occur at Head Quarters if I resigned, I would do so at once; but I never could bear scenes and have no pluck for the occasion.

Schouvaloff called on me on Saturday afternoon (late) and stayed a good while. I knew he came to talk about the victory and I was resolved not to help him, so he was obliged to break it at last. He was "candid" as usual, but not "gay": evidently depressed.

He said it was a decided victory: the only real battle since the war (not true for 2nd Plevna was a real battle and a great one) "but it was not in the right place." "The Danube must decide the course of events, and he feared that his countrymen had already been repulsed again at

Plevna." This turned out to be true: but I think his depression was occasioned by something more serious than a military defeat. He knew then, what I only knew last night, that the collapse of the Russian army is complete. They acknowledge to have lost (dead) 50,000 in war: but they have 20,000 in nominal hospitals at Plevna housed in worse than pig-sties, and perhaps 30,000 in the Lom and Shipka: all these will die. The Imperial Guard, just arrived, in a horrid state. Half their horses already dead. The only fodder prepared for them being compressed hay which was damp, or in a state of effervescence, and the horses won't touch it. Literally, half the horses that just arrived, dead! Our informant seems to think that, instead of a winter campaign in Bulgaria, we may perhaps look out for "a retreat from Moscow catastrophe." And all this is concealed from the Emperor and the Russian nation, the only two influences that could bring about peace. . . .

The Cabinets meet on the 5th November and I hope will have concluded their main labors in a fortnight. I expect the Faery back about the 20th or 22nd and I suppose I shall have to go to her immediately.

As for our meeting, I am in hopes that after the Cabinets you may perhaps be able to receive

Yours ever,

B

Brighton,
October 25th, 1877

. . . I speak the truth to you on some matters, though I may not on such, to others. When I say I am ill, I mean it. I leave this place, which I do on 29th, in no degree better as regards the main and only suffering—Asthma. I am now inhaling night and day, a last desperate effort, and futile.

It is quite impossible I can go on, because the constitution of this Country is a Parliamentary Government—"C'est un Gouvernement qui parle."

I can't lead a House of Parliament, even House of Lords without a voice—without health. And Lord Mayor's Day when my words may govern the world, what am I to do? If it were not for the Faery, I certainly would at once retire, but I wait her return before it is broached. . . .

From Brighton Beaconsfield returned to London, breaking his journey at Eridge, the seat of Lord Abergavenny, on the way. And on reaching London he took the precaution of seeing some of his leading colleagues before the meeting of the Cabinet. He also accepted the advice which had been given him to call in Dr. Kidd:

To Lady Bradford

10 Downing Street,
November 1st, 1877

Hardly a moment for a line. I have seen Lord Derby and shall see Salisbury who is at Hatfield to-morrow at 12. He comes up on purpose to see me. I think it best to see some of the leading spirits before the Cabinet assembles. I think it will do. What is going to happen the future must decide, for we are entirely without information for a week. But the state of the Russian army is such that I think a winter campaign is impossible.

To-day I saw Dr. Kidd who cured the Lord Chancellor. I like him much. He examined me as if I were a recruit, but reports no organic deficiency. My complaint is Bronchial Asthma more distressing than Bronchitis, but curable, which Bronchitis is not; and I am to be cured—and very soon! This is a ray of hope and I trust I may get to the Lord Mayor's dinner, for if I do not, Europe will be alarmed, England agitated, and the Tory party frightened. There is egotism for you.

The messenger absolutely in the room and won't wait.

Yours ever,

B

The Near East was not the only place in which the smooth progress of events was being rudely interrupted. "Affairs in France," he told Lady Bradford on the 7th, "are grave. There will be no visit, but the Marshal[5] must resign; people laugh at him and that is fatal in Paris. Playing at being a hero and not doing it does not answer. Nothing justified his conduct but the pre-determination of

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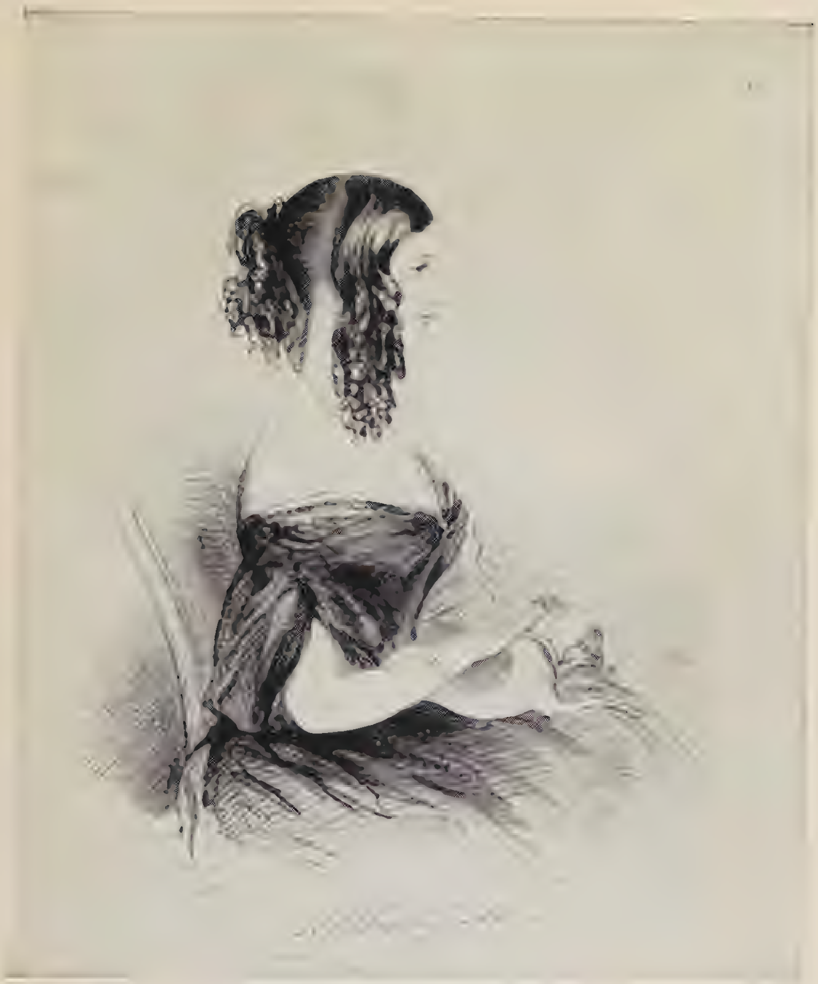
[5] See above, p. 152. After the *coup d'état* of May, the Assembly had been prorogued for a month and on June 22nd, a few days after its reassembling, a dissolution had been voted by the Senate. The result of the ensuing elections had shown that feeling was strongly against the President, for 307 of the 506 candidates put forward by his Government were defeated. The issue had been regarded as being between Republicanism and Parliamentary Government on the one hand, and personal rule on the other; and the verdict had been overwhelmingly in favour of the former. With greater courage than discretion the President made one more attempt to have his own way by appointing, on November 23rd, a Ministry composed of persons outside the Chamber. And it was only when the Chamber refused to acknowledge the new Ministry that he at last realised that he must accept one or other of the two alternatives which Gambetta had held out to him, and either submit or resign. He chose the former and in December entrusted M. Dufaure, a moderate Republican, with the formation of a Ministry.



ANNE, COUNTESS OF CHESTERFIELD IN 1840

From a drawing by D'Orsay

a *coup d'état.*" And he added as an afterthought—"They say Duc D'Aumale has a chance of being President." The Queen had not forgotten her promise to visit her Prime Minister at his own home, and arrangements were now put in train:

10 Downing Street,
November 11th, 1877

. . . The Faery has written that on her return she means to pay her visit to Hughenden! I hope this will not interfere with mine to Weston, but I tremble. "Dearest Jane"[6] is to put herself in communication with Monty to settle everything. Monty has been informed that he is to be present. The Queen comes with only one lady and one gentleman, that I "may be put to no inconvenience." The Queen and Princess Beatrice are to lunch with Lord Beaconsfield; another table (and room) for the others. Don't know a word of this when you are at Cumberland Lodge. . . .

But it is clear from a letter written to Lady Chesterfield on November 22nd, that the visit of a Sovereign was a matter not easily arranged—"The Queen who has perplexed my movements very much these last weeks, changing them every day, will, as I am now advised, probably not return till the 4th December, and talks of paying a visit to Hughenden the week after—so it is impossible for me to reach Bretby." He was determined, however, to pay his promised visit to Lady Bradford at Weston:

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[6] Lady Ely.

November 26th

Yes: after so long and trying an absence there is every chance of our meeting again—and to-morrow! The dinner yesterday[7] rather bored me; the Duke of Cambridge and the usual gang . . . I sate next the Princess who looked extremely well and told me in her most guttural tones that she understood I had got a new doctor "who was a quack." Considering Oscar Clayton was upstairs, I thought this cool; but I confined myself to observing that I hoped he was one, as I had found all regular physicians incompetent.

He was to have some busy hours before escaping from London for his brief respite at Weston:

November 27th, 1877

I got your note and shall depart to-morrow from Paddington D.V. . . . I have had a busy day of colleague audiences. The Chancellor of the Exchequer who arrived this morning from Balmoral and has to report himself; the Lord Chancellor; the first Lord of the Admiralty who has to make a great speech on Thursday and does not know what to say; and finally—the crash of doom—Lord Derby with many cares.

News that Osman Pasha had succeeded in breaking through the Russian cordon round Plevna, proved, like all news of an optimistic character from Turkey, to be illusory. But the purveyors of these reports were in no way abashed, and on December 6th Beaconsfield wrote in cheerful spirits to Lady Chesterfield: "You must be quite delighted with Suleiman's great victory. We have an account to-day of further triumphs, but as yet not so well authenticated. If he could manage to take Tirnova the experts say the investment of Plevna must be raised. The new account is that Suleiman has taken Popkoi." And he was in equally good spirits when he wrote an account of his visit to Windsor to Lady Bradford on the 7th:

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[7] At Marlborough House.

10 Downing Street,
December 7th, 1877

Just returned from Windsor. The audience lasted from 12.30 to luncheon time, when I joined that lively and interesting being the Duchess Dowager of Athol and three younger female courtiers, who vied with her in loveliness and fascinating manners. Nothing could be more formal than the hushed tones of their conversation, and it was impossible to assert one's share in it. I was fairly famished and was ashamed of my silence. At last I said I had a special train and if they liked, I would take them all up to town with me. They seemed shocked and horrified; and when, in reply to what would happen, I promised to give them a dinner at a café and take them all to the play, I thought the ceiling would have fallen down. The Duchess took it all quite *au sérieux*.

The Queen will spend her Christmas at Osborne and comes to Hughenden to-morrow week, the 15th. . . .

Before many days were over the bubble of Turkish victories was finally pricked. "I fear the Turks will be destroyed," he told Lady Bradford on the 10th. "I hear the same jealousies still prevail and it is impossible to get them to act in concert. All want to be Grand Vizier, which is to be the reward of victory. If they don't take care, the present Grand Vizier will be the last." And in a letter to Lady Chesterfield written the same day he added—"Baker Pasha who has now got a command, says that in his experience there have been four occasions when with energy and concert the whole Russian army might have been driven into the Danube." The fall of Plevna was the final blow:

To Lady Chesterfield

Hughenden Manor,
December 13th, 1877

Dear Darling,

Although we were always told Plevna must fall, one hoped against hope. Things can't be much worse and are very critical. There is a Cabinet to-morrow and there will be others no doubt immediately, but I must hurry back here for Saturday is my royal reception, which has fallen upon trouble and inconvenient times.

I was at Windsor yesterday—went early and returned late.

If I don't write you must understand that I have much to do and more to think of. It is not want of time that prevents letter writing, but the absorbing nature of affairs which renders it impossible to do anything but attend to them and brood over them.

Pray read 3rd Vol. of Prince Consort's life by T. Martin. It is one of the most deeply interesting volumes I ever met with, full of the Eastern question on which Albert writes like a master.

Ever,

B

It was inevitable that the collapse of the Turkish resistance should have precipitated a Cabinet crisis; and Beaconsfield's satisfaction at the Queen's visit to Hughenden was overshadowed by the difficulties of his position:

To Lady Bradford

10 Downing Street,
December 17th, 1877

I am here with another Cabinet and another to-morrow at twelve! I can't conceal, and don't wish to conceal from you, that affairs are most critical, and I have so much to do and think of I really cannot write.

The visit of Saturday a great success: fine day, and with some gleams of sunshine. The Faery seemed to admire, and be interested in, everything, and has written to me a very pretty letter to that effect.

I have got to go to Windsor to-morrow "to dine and sleep," rather a tax in these busy times and with my feeble health.

The Faery took away my statuette by Trentanova as a memorial of Hughenden. I had for the Princess the most beautiful *bonbonnière* you ever saw, or fancied: just fresh from Paris. I could tell you many things to amuse you; but they must keep for more tranquil times.

Yours ever,

B

No wonder that he had written that affairs were "most critical." At the Cabinet in question, Lord Derby, Lord Carnarvon and Lord Salisbury had made it plain that they were definitely opposed to the Prime Minister's policy; and Beaconsfield had made it equally plain that if they could not accommodate their views to his he would at once place his resignation in the hands of the Queen. It was this announcement that had led to an adjournment of the Cabinet till the next day. Once more a *modus vivendi* was discovered:

Most Private 10 Downing Street,
December 19th, 1877

The great struggle is over and I have triumphed.

On Monday night there was virtually no Government, but on Tuesday the Recusants fell upon their knees and surrendered at discretion. Parliament is to meet 17th next month. There is to be a large increase of forces and England is to mediate directly between the belligerents.

I was at Windsor yesterday and sate at dinner next to the Faery, who is delighted with all that has happened. I have been talking and writing now for several days without intermission; therefore, you must excuse this brief and hurried line.

Yours ever,

B

But if an open rupture had been avoided, there was still much to be done, and little enough chance of any holiday for the head of the Administration:

December 21st, 1877

I send you a little line to thank you for your letters which are a consolation to me. The pressure of affairs is so great that I doubt whether I shall be able to leave town. This morning I have had to see, Secretary of War, Chancellor of Exchequer, First Lord of Admiralty, Mr. Roebuck . . . and all very long, and the Lord Chancellor dines with me *tête-à-tête;* and now I have got a Hanoverian Baron waiting for me with a letter from the great dethroned and which must be placed by him in my hand—and at 7 o'clock Sir Henry Elliot! Here is a bill of fare with as many dishes as a Christmas dinner, which last year I partook with you. I am sorry to hear no better an account of Bradford. Myself, thanks to arsenic, phosphorus and other poisons, I am not so bad.

And his remaining letters during the year speak eloquently of the state of turmoil in which it drew slowly and laboriously to its close:

10 Downing Street,
December 23rd, 1877

Here we are with all the business in the world to be transacted, and everybody away. Even Derby must go down to his home at 5.30. I believe Knowsley is held by the tenure of its Lord eating a roast turkey on Christmas Day on the spot. Fortunately, Monty is here, whom I am obliged to send about to Ambassadors and make write to Ministers of State.

I was at Windsor yesterday and the Faery will remain there for a week, at least, till Friday. I have got to go down there again and, I fear, more than once. All is well as long as I can keep to my room, or a morning walk; but toilette and evening mannerisms destroy me.

The J.M.[8] asked me to dine with them on Christmas Day. It is impossible—but having the largest pineapple sent to me yesterday, I forwarded it, with refusal, to Janetta: a golden apple of the Hesperides. I hope it will stop their mouths from abusing me for not going.

I suppose you know Bretby is in town, and I will call there this afternoon, though I am really quite incapable of conversation and wish most ardently the world would leave me alone to my business, which is hard enough. I want nothing else except letters from you.

Yours ever,

B

---

10 Downing Street,
December 28th, 1877

Yesterday was a hard day. Had to get up at 7 o'clock at Windsor, dark and cold: was at Downing Street by ten—many interviews and then a long Cabinet, and then writing to the Faery—so it was quite impossible to write to some one else.

An amusing family party at the Castle. "Uncle George," so they call the Duke of Cambridge, who is really their cousin, Louise and Lorne and the Christians and Beatrice. I sate next to Princess Louise who was agreeable and tried to be agreeable.

As you want to know something about Peace and War, you will be glad to hear that the Sultan has solicited our kind offices for peace with Russia, and that H.M.'s Government have accepted the trust. God knows what will happen, but it is a good answer to that vain maniac Shaftesbury and your simple friend Westminster, who, at the instigation of Gladstone, are getting up an agitation against the Government because it is going to war.

---

[8] John Manners.

If Russia refuses it will put her still more in the wrong, and if the weather on the Danube be so damnable as it is at St. James', perhaps Russia will be prudent and reasonable.

Disappointed at not hearing that you were about to perch in Belgravia for 4 and 20 hours.

Yours ever,

B

In the circle (in the corridor) the three Princesses who were grouped together sent for me, on the plea that I was standing in a draught, etc. They wanted a little amusement. When I came up to them I said, "Three Goddesses—to whom am I to give the golden apple?"

They say that Princess Beatrice has never heard of the Golden Apple or anything else of that dangerous tendency.

10 Downing Street,
December 29th, 1877

I have a very fair chance of being comparatively free on Monday. There are no Cabinets till Wednesday. So I shall be able to call on you whenever I learn it is convenient to receive me.

The announcement of the application of the Porte makes a great sensation.

Yours ever,

B

The Meeting of Parliament was the 1st Act of the Drama. This is the second. What will be the 3rd?

CHAPTER X

January–June 1878

DISSENSIONS IN THE CABINET

The New Year brought with it a fresh crisis in the Cabinet. On January 2nd, Lord Carnarvon made a speech which the Prime Minister regarded as wholly incompatible with his membership of the Government. He gave vent to his disgust in his letter to Lady Bradford of the 3rd—"Carnarvon when I thought all was right, has made a terrible escapade, a speech worthy of Gladstone. . . . He has gone to-day after the Cabinet to Osborne. I don't envy him his audience. . . . I have been obliged to speak my mind to him at last, and I do not know whether I shall meet him again as a colleague and do not much care." And he made a further reference to the matter in a letter to Lady Chesterfield on January 4th—"I thought things for a few days were going pretty well and that there was the chance of a peace not disastrous for England; but Carnarvon's speech has upset everything and made the Russians more arrogant than ever. . . . I cannot express to you what mischief he has done . . . he comes up to London and in half an hour without seeing a single colleague delivers himself of all the platitudes of Highclere—totally ignorant of all that I know, who never leave my post and see and hear hundreds of persons and things." It was not only political things that Beaconsfield heard: "I can scarcely write but tell you a little news. Lord Ailesbury I hear is dying, and Lord Rosebery has wooed and won the heiress of Mentmore and pockets three millions!"

Lord Beaconsfield's plain speaking to Lord Carnarvon at the meeting of the Cabinet on January 3rd left his colleagues in no doubt as to his determination to proceed with his programme with or without the approval of the dissentients. Beaconsfield himself was uncertain as to the outcome when he wrote to Lady Bradford on the 6th:

10 Downing Street,
January 6th, 1878

Nothing is yet settled: all confused and perplexing. But, as there is a Cabinet to-morrow, it is impossible that the decision should be delayed. Though all his colleagues think his conduct indefensible and calculated to produce the utmost evil, nearly all of them are on their knees to him not to resign. They fear further ruptures and think, with cause, that only one interpretation can be placed on such an incident—that we are going at once to war with Russia! At this moment, Parliament on the eve of meeting, there would be, of course, the most factious agitation in the country, and instead of being welcomed by the House of Commons, carrying our measure and securing our peace, we should probably be defeated or weakly supported, and have to dissolve Parliament. . . .

Through all these difficulties he was warmly supported and encouraged by the Queen who gave him frequent tokens of her whole-hearted approval. "I forgot to tell you," he added at the end of his letter of the 6th to Lady Bradford, "a beautiful Xmas gift from the Faery—'which I trust you will not think unworthy of a place in the fine library at Hughenden'—a gorgeous tome, the Windsor Holbein drawings of the Court of Henry VIII." Twenty-four hours later he had the satisfaction of telling Lady Chesterfield that the crisis had been surmounted:

10 Downing Street,
January 7th, 1878

Dear Darling,

I can hardly write to you I am so pressed with affairs; but I must send one line to say that the Cabinet remains unbroken and that Carnarvon remains, which I think will not displease you. The mischief that has been done cannot be recalled, but, at this critical moment, it is of the utmost importance to show an unbroken front.

I have got a Garter; a Thistle; and two Lord Lieutenancies vacant. I won't fill them up in a hurry—I will see how people behave.

Yours ever,
Beaconsfield

Had the Turks, indeed, proved "their vigour and resources" as Beaconsfield had not so long since claimed that they had, the spectacle might have stiffened the wobblers in the Cabinet; but no sooner had the crack in the Ministry been patched than the Turks gave a further display of their incompetence, thereby arousing afresh the qualms of those who were tied unwillingly enough to the Prime Minister's chariot wheels:

To Lady Chesterfield

10 Downing Street,
January 10th, 1878

The Turkish army surrounded and surrendered in the Shipka Pass! More than forty battalions! What can you do for such people! The curtain must soon fall. All these Military disasters have arisen from affairs being directed from Constantinople, by a Council of War chiefly consisting of civilians! Osman, Mehemet Ali, I believe even Suleiman, have been their victims. I expect to hear shortly of a disgraceful peace, perhaps even before our Parliament assembles.

I can write no more being confused with distracted visitors and distracting telegrams.

Yours ever,

B

This dreadful news deprives me of appetite even for your delicious birds with an ominous name.

To Lady Bradford

10 Downing Street,
January 14th, 1878

I am literally overwhelmed with affairs; Cabinets every day and unceasing anxiety and toil.

Lady Ches. has been in town for some days, but I have literally been unable to call on her. I will to-day if I can for ten minutes very late, but I am quite worn out. . . .

Nothing can be blacker and more disastrous than the aspect of public affairs. The telegrams come in one after another like the last scene of Macbeth.

Yours ever,

B

10 Downing Street,
January 15th, 1878

I shall try to call at No. 43 to-morrow at *half past five.*

I have had many terrible days, but none like this. Derby in bed quite broken-down; Carnarvon worse than ever. Obliged to throw over the Duke of Cambridge and his Council of Generals, being kept so long at the Cabinet; Wharncliffe in one room, Lansdowne in another, waiting for instructions for their speeches on Thursday. And a Cabinet on the most important affairs and the Secretary of State in bed, and obliged to send messages to him. The doctors would not let him have it held at his own house. And three other colleagues at Osborne!

The confusion is so great that it seems the end of the world

Yours ever,

B

Cabinet meets again at 12 to-morrow.

10 Downing Street,
January 21st, 1878

Affairs are more troubled than ever, and I cannot write even to you. It is not want of time, for my scraps don't occupy much; but it is the absorption of affairs which renders it so difficult to divert one's mind from the business over which one is brooding, when one is not even actively engaged in its transaction.

The Faery sent me a beautiful letter to-day, expressing her wish to confer on me the Garter, as "a mark of her confidence and support" and a great deal more which I blush to quote. But I have asked to decline it, for which I hope you will not scold me. As Lord Melbourne said "I don't want to bribe myself."

I hope to have a line to-morrow from your graceful and sportive pen.

Yours ever,

B

Absence of news from Constantinople was sometimes even more trying than news of disasters. "Nothing is heard, or has been heard, of the conditions of peace," he told Lady Chesterfield on the 22nd. "There was a Cabinet to-day expecting them. And I fancy we shall have to meet to-morrow. The Cabinet really sits *en permanence!*" And on the same day he wrote to Lady Bradford—"I fear I have nothing to divert your gloom, for under this roof there is nothing but labor, anxiety and care—and daily Cabinets." His attachment to Monty Corry was sincere and he viewed his frequent absences on the score of health, or of social engagements, with good-humoured tolerance. But it amused him to write of these interludes in the routine of official duty with a sharply ironic pen:

. . . I'm glad to direct this to Melbury. . . . If Monty sees the direction he will begin to sigh. He is, by the by, quite a favorite at the young Court, as well as at the old one. He dined a few days back with Prince Hal, Princess Louise and Lady Archie, and then they all went to the new play, "Diplomacy," which delighted them. After the play the Prince said he was going to sup with a friend and asked Monty to accompany him. I quite forget who the friend was now—Jem Farquharson or something of that sort. And there he found some congenial spirits and Mr. Standish and Mrs. Stanley and the Jersey beauty whose name begins with an L;[1] and what with oysters and champagne and so on, it was getting very late, and very late it was when it broke up. And then Prince Hal said, "I shall go to the Turf now and play whist!" Even Monty could not stand that and escaped, having had a real day with Prince Hal!

A few days later he wrote—"I am private secretary for poor dear Monty who is not equal to writing a letter and goes to-morrow to South of France. What a calamity! And at such a moment!" The time was indeed inopportune. Developments in the Near East necessitated at last a definite demonstration by Great Britain; and this time Lord Carnarvon did actually resign:

10 Downing Street,
January 24th, 1878

The fleet is ordered to Constantinople and the Chancellor of the Exchequer has given notice of a vote (probably a very large one) for Monday next. This morning (for which the Cabinet of yesterday has prepared us), Lord Derby and Lord Carnarvon resigned. All this is generally speaking, quite secret, especially the resignations; but I suppose they will be known to-morrow.

---

[1] Mrs. Langtry, afterwards Lady de Bathe.

I have had some of the most terrible days I can well remember—and am too much harassed and exhausted to do more than say I am

Yours ever,

B

January 27th, 1878

I think it will not do to write to Bournemouth and yesterday I could not send even the "two lines." And now in less than an hour there is to be a Cabinet—a Sunday Cabinet!! And after that much to do. Lord Derby remains with us as his presence at the Cabinet to-day will prove.

But Lord Carnarvon remained obdurate. "He must be immensely astounded to find himself detached from Salisbury and that Derby has left him in the lurch." In two letters written hurriedly on January 31st, and February 1st, he told Lady Bradford of the changes in the Government consequent on Lord Carnarvon's resignation:

10 Downing Street,
January 31st, 1878

I was vexed, and more than vexed, at not being able to send a line yesterday—but these are dreadful times, and when we have morning Cabinets, and the House of Lords, and the intervening work which the Cabinet occasions—the hours slip away and vanish, so that it is night before you are aware it is morning. Your letter was most amusing, and keeps me quite up to the scene. I hope the journal will be continued.

There is no news to-day of the Russian advance; they may be at Constantinople for aught I know! They can't pretend now that they are occupying it for strategical reasons, when the Sultan has surrendered at discretion. The great debate commences to-night. Mr. Secretary Cross answers Red Forster. It will be a long affair, probably a week; but I expect the Government will have a large majority.

Sir Michael Beach succeeds Carnarvon, but the new Irish Secretary is not yet settled.

I think I told you the Thistles were to be offered to the Duke of Hamilton and the Marquis of Lothian. But the first must manage to go to Court—which he never yet has done.

I must stop.

Yours ever,

B

10 Downing Street,
February 1st, 1878

I could not finish my letter yesterday, and I can hardly begin one to-day. I am pressed and harassed to death, and no Monty!

The Duke of Northumberland is the new Privy Seal.

I am glad you had time to read Gladstone's speech. What an exposure! The mask has fallen and instead of a pious Christian, we find a vindictive fiend who confesses he has, for a year and a half, been dodging and manœuvring against an individual—because he was a successful rival!

There has been a monster open-air meeting at Wolverhampton and resolutions in favor of H. M. Government carried as at Sheffield.

The city meeting an event! I have written to the Lord Mayor.

Yours ever,

B

Your letters most amusing.

In spite of the tremendous pressure of events Beaconsfield found time to move occasionally in society. From the Duchess of Manchester he obtained an account of a visit by the Prince of Wales to Lord and Lady Alington at Crichel—"the Prince has been very snappish the whole visit—snappish against the Opposition, against the Government and a great many other bodies, things and persons which have quite escaped my memory—though I just now remember Austria and Germany were included among them." But the general tenor of opinion in society was satisfactory to him—"All is mystery; discontent and suspicion at every Court and endless intrigues and schemes. Only one thing seems certain—that the Opposition have committed suicide." And writing of the feeling in the House of Commons he said on February 6th—"The great debate will not close till Saturday morning. The majority for Government will be great—from 120 to 150 'tis said." Beaconsfield's popularity was certainly great. "The crowd was so great," he wrote from Downing Street on the 7th, "from this street to the

House of Lords, to escort me, that it was very difficult to reach my point of destination though piloted between the forms of the daring Abergavenny and the beauteous Abercorn. You would have been amused."

It was still difficult to discover exactly what was happening in Turkey, for the news of one day was as often as not contradicted by that of the next. "I suppose an armistice is settled," he wrote on the 6th; "but that is all we can say. Russia does not like it and quite objects to Vienna for Conference." He added that he still believed that notwithstanding the preliminaries were signed, the Russians would somehow enter Constantinople. The 7th was a day of great excitement:

To Lady Bradford

10 Downing Street,
February 7th, 1878

This has been a terrible day of excitement. Last night there came news from Constantinople that all the wires were cut by the Russians, so that our intelligence had to reach us *via* Bombay; that the Russians were on the very point of reaching both Constantinople and Gallipoli and that they occupied the principal position in the defensive works of Constantinople so that the city was at their mercy.

Cabinet at 11 o'clock, rather hard work for those of my colleagues who had been to Münster's ball (to the Austrian Prince) and from which I prudently refrained.

The funds fell nearly two per cent. and all the Russian stocks that had been rising, tumbled down; but there seems to be a chance of the situation being exaggerated, and

Schouvaloff called Lord Derby out of the House of Lords to give him a telegram just received from Gortchakoff declaring the rumors were false. I am not so sure of that, but we are in the thick of great events and something will happen every day.

Yours,

B

On February 10th he wrote—"Things at Constantinople blacker every moment, and I am sorry to say our friend Schouvaloff is obliged to tell greater lies than Ignatieff"; and as late as March 4th—"No official, or authentic terms of peace have yet reached us." There is now a break in the correspondence until March 22nd, when he resumed his letters to Lady Bradford:

10 Downing Street,
March 22nd, 1878

You were prophetic last night, for I have a regular Influenza cold—constant coughing and streamy eyes.

I have just had my audience. I was scolded for coming out in such a plight; but my Royal Mistress was not much better than her Minister. The Kingdom was never governed with such an amount of catarrh and sneezing.

I'm too ill and aching to be out later—I have written to Duke of Richmond that I can't be in my place. But what vexes me sorely is that I shall not see you before you go, and do not even know where you are going.

I was amused last night by what I saw and heard and greatly charmed by your society.

Yours ever,

B

10 Downing Street,
March 25th, 1878

Nothing to tell you. Then why do you write? Difficult to answer.

I am somewhat better, but ought not to go out. Then why do you? Because, plea indisposition, I did not reply to some notice of Granville's on Friday and have heard since of nothing but my illness. So at great inconvenience and some risk I go down to House of Lords, because I could not ask G. again to postpone his Motion.

Telegrams come every quarter of an hour from a certain place, to know how I am, full of sympathy when sent and full of anger when not answered. Her Majesty is herself much better, but "Beatrice has the same attack as I have, a feverish catarrh." How strange!

No news from Russia, though I have reason to believe Schouvaloff has the answer and has had for days.

You say you never saw me when in town. I thought I called every day: sometimes I thought too often.

Adieu!

B

"I send you a hurried line," he wrote on April 2nd, "that you may know that I am alive. Our *Circular* published to-day seems to produce a great effect." And on the 4th:

10 Downing Street

I am now going to Windsor where I shall be kept late, with little chance on my return of writing to you—which I could not do yesterday. Your letter of this morn is very amusing. I think the *Circular* has put the country on its legs again. I wonder what Harty-T—— thinks of it . . .

The dinner yesterday at P. Wyndhams' was of an æsthetical character. Princess Louise, De Vescis (of course), etc. etc., and Browning a noisy conceited poet; all the talk about pictures and art and Raffaello, and what Sterne calls "the Correggiosity of Correggio."

I dine at the Louise Lornes to-day in case I return in time, which is doubtful. George Hamilton is to be sworn in a Privy Councillor to-day and becomes Vice-President of the Council, and E. Stanhope succeeds him at India Board.

The new recruits are Sir Matthew W. Ridley, Under Secretary of State, and Mr. Talbot has a place.

Yours ever,

B

The Garter was declined but with great affection.

For some days there was little to write about—"The news in the paper is nonsense. Things are as they were, not worse. It is still equal betting." Thus on April 17th; and on the 18th—"The announcement of the Indian expedition to Malta creates much excitement. It will show Russia we are in earnest and I hope, therefore, may do good." There were two by-elections in progress over which the Prime Minister was not very happy—"The poll of the South Northumberland election has this moment come in. We lose by two votes! This is worse than half a dozen Tamworths. In fact it prevents my writing any more." He was in ignorance, apparently, of the arrangements which had been made for fighting the Tamworth election, for after it was over he told Lord Bradford that he did not know whether the candidate, Colonel the Hon. Francis Bridgeman, had been sent down by the Chief Whip or whether it had been a matter of local arrangement. "If the first, my strict orders were violated, for I never sanction a member retiring from a Borough in order to stand for a county. The Borough is generally lost; always in danger; as irrespective of all other considerations, the self-love of the Borough is offended and shows itself." But on the 20th he took a brighter view of things both at home and abroad:

10 Downing Street,
April 20th, 1878

. . . Things look rather better. The Russian armies are to retire from Gallipoli and Constantinople and as far as Adrianople and the British fleet to Besika Bay. As we went up (and too late) to the sea of Marmora only to protect, if possible, the Turkish capital, this is a great triumph for England and betokens, I rather think, still greater. As some time, a week or more, must elapse before this can be effected, as the lines must be drawn at Constantinople, etc. etc., I must request, on your part, the utmost reserve.

S. Northumberland after all was not so very bad, though they all seemed to bungle. Let us not despair now of Tamworth.

I go to Hatfield on Monday on an indefinite visit—so that I may at least sleep in the country. The Faery arrives at Windsor on 25th and I am to be with her the following morning.

Yours ever,

B

On Easter Sunday Lord Beaconsfield purposed attending Divine Service at St. Michael's, where he had been given the use of Lady Macclesfield's pew; "but though in good time I could not enter the sacred precinct. I tried three doors, but found a mob, as in old days when the drama flourished, was formed at the pit door. The church could not be taken —a regular Plevna—and was obliged ignominiously to retreat, Fleming having, of course, prepared a rich discourse for my edification." Neither side was satisfied with the poll in South Northumberland—"I suppose S. Northumberland will be settled by the issue of a new writ; both can't sit and neither will have a scrutiny. You have all my good wishes for Tamworth." But good wishes were of no avail and on April 25th he wrote:

10 Downing Street,
April 25th, 1878

You know how I sympathise with you, and I will say no more. The rumor that reaches me is that Sir Robert Peel did the mischief. But why? Was it revenge for Derby never employing him?

I have just come up from Hatfield where I was wanted, as Münster was there and much business; but Prince Hal required my presence.

They say that Gortchakoff is really dying. I believe the illness of Bismarck is not much.

To-morrow I go to Windsor.

Affairs are vast, pressing and complicated. The probable death of Gortchakoff adds to the confusion—what its final result may be is more doubtful.

A hurried line, but with 1,000 kind thoughts.

Yours ever,

B

Beaconsfield remained in London throughout the Easter recess, and finding little of importance to write about and society away in the country, fell into a flippant mood:

April 27th, 1878

One complains of being lonely; but on the whole one is more at ease in solitude. As for Monty whom you think (and the Queen also) is my constant companion, he only stayed in London for eight and forty hours and I have never seen him since. He is now at Melbury. I don't see why he should not be here and try his hand at a little business. I never wanted him more; but I suspect his career is over. Did I tell you Duke of Connaught is to be married to a Princess of Prussia? But it is not to be mentioned at present.

"There is nobody in town except the Princess of Wales," he wrote on the 29th, "on whom I am now going to call to give her a little fresh news which is rather in her brother's favor, who scarcely deems his throne worth a week's purchase. So kings have cares as well as Ministers and Countesses." There was to be an investiture, he said, "of the female knights of the new Indian Order"; and he spoke hopefully of a recent clerical appointment—"I am glad you approve of the Bishop. He seems a success with all 'schools of church thought'—*alias* church nonsense." At the end of April London was still empty:

10 Downing Street,
April 30th, 1878

London quite empty, only, as Topham Beauclerk said, "a million of vulgar." Seeing nobody, I hear nothing and yet though I have postponed it till half past 6 o'clock I write you a line. Taking a drive, I called on Janetta:[2] she looked very well and had taken a walk, so I suppose all danger is over. She asked me to dine—to meet "Jem Daly," one of my secretaries, him who told me she had had twins and who being, as I am assured, the "friend of the house," "amigo de la Casa," cannot have been mistaken. Several little children, all boys, were playing about the stairs. I took up one urchin who seemed just born, but he told me he had two younger brothers; though he was not quite sure of their names or of his own.

Bradford paid me a visit this morning on his way to the races, where he will meet Sir Robert Peel, who, by the by, has declined to dine with me on H.M.'s birthday. . . . Barrington came to lunch, but as he came from his brother Percy's dull house in the provinces, he came to listen and not to communicate; so I got nothing for the repast I afforded him.

With many hopes you are better,

I am,

B

On May 2nd, he wrote to Lady Chesterfield:

10 Downing Street

I went to Windsor yesterday and sate next to the Princess

---

[2] Lady John Manners.

Royal (Crown Princess of Germany) at dinner. I was the only guest. She is clever and talks well, and told me a good deal.

Lady A. is a lady of much information. I have not heard of the Cyprus expedition and will answer that if you go to Malta you will find the troops there.

Henry Lennox writes to me that he is going to Bretby on an adventure in the neighborhood—his 101st matchmaking. He begs me to write to you to help him. I don't know how it is—but he has had plenty of helpers in life in these matters, but never succeeds. However I have done his bidding. I believe the lady is a Breweress at Burton.

Yours ever,

B

Strawberries greeted me on my arrival—very fine.

"A long Cabinet only just over, much to do in a short space," he wrote on the 14th, "and then that terrible Academy dinner which someday will be my death. Oh! How many social taxes there are worse than the income tax!" With Lady Bradford's approaching move to London for the season, Beaconsfield became anxious to arrange a meeting. "I dine to-day with the Rosslyns," he wrote on May 6th, "a long engagement, and assumed at the time of acceptance I should of course meet you. Who could have believed that you could be away from London on May 6th!" And on May 9th, "I find some heavy work on my return from Court which has been later than I expected. I have also got to dine at Gloucester House—and at eight precisely—so I fear it is impossible for me to take the chance of finding you at home as I had hoped and wished." This was exasperating, and on the 10th he wrote—"There will be no chance of our ever meeting unless we make some arrangement. I am tolerably free to-day. Shall I call at five o'clock? Or is that too soon?" Matters were arranged to his satisfaction, and during the latter half of May his letters were addressed mainly to Lady Chesterfield:

10 Downing Street,
May 15th, 1878

Forgot to tell you I went to St. Anne's Soho on Sunday last with Lord Barrington. Service a little too long, but on the whole good. Out of the great choir of more than fifty persons, the chief performances were by a little boy who reminded me of Selina's piping bull finch.

Notwithstanding the ceaseless inspections of the Guards under my windows and the magnificence of their bands, which are superior even to the cathedral service of the Soho Church, peace is said to be in the ascendant. England, however, goes on with its warlike preparations all the same.

I saw Selina yesterday and thought she seemed better, but she has had a harder trial than we thought—and is by no means herself.

I dine to-day with the Clevelands and meet the Duke of Cambridge, my warlike colleague. I can't go out at night or I might meet Selina who is going to a Salisbury reception.

Flowers and fruits and butter— All hail!

Yours ever,

B.

A sudden attack of illness interrupted his programme of social engagements and caused him to write on the 15th and 16th to Lady Bradford—"I am anxious to know how you are. I have quite lost my voice, which is very disagreeable at this moment when I am to be out and about a great deal . . . It cost me a pang not to go to dear Cornelia's[3] last night; but the fact is, as I think I told you before, I begin to die about 11 o'clock and am fairly buried by midnight when you are arriving with your young ladies." And the next day—"I was obliged to leave my dinner yesterday at the Clevelands' at 10 o'clock being wretchedly ill; but a vapor-bath last night and my doctor this morning have patched me up." His last letter in May was written to Lady Chesterfield:

10 Downing Street,
May 27th, 1878

Dear Darling,

I am really too tired to write you a line, or at least, to anyone else.

Henry Lennox has been here. I find he has given up his Burton Bride and now appears to be after some one who advertises for a husband in a French newspaper! I could not see him but for a moment, as the Cabinet was waiting.

The papers say we are going to have a Congress and, if so, we shall have peace; but we are not out of the wood by any means and the wood is a large one.

The Prince of Wales is by no means well. I saw him yesterday in his room. He could not dine with me, as you saw, and now Mr. Sykes, who was to have had a house warming to-morrow at which the Prince was to be the chief guest, has sent me a line to postpone the festival.

---

[3] Lady Cornelia Guest, afterwards Lady Wimborne.

The Queen sent me a salmon 18 lbs. in weight, caught in the Dee, for my Birthday dinner.

Yours,

B

CHAPTER XI

June–August 1878

THE CONGRESS OF BERLIN

The Prime Minister's reference, in his letter of May 27th, to a Congress, proved prophetic; and a week later he was writing to Lady Chesterfield amid all the bustle prior to his own departure for Berlin:

10 Downing Street,
June 4th, 1878

I really have not time to write, my very dear friend—I depart on Saturday with Monty and my personal suite of four or five persons, with couriers *en avant* who will arrange about hotels and beds and other botherations. Four days will bring me to Berlin: Calais, I think, Bruxelles, Cologne, Hanover. Lord Salisbury departs on Tuesday with the bulk of the Mission.

The visit to Hatfield of the Crown Prince and Princess was in consequence of their disappointment at that place three years ago or so, when four thunderstorms destroyed, absolutely destroyed, a splendid fête given in their honor and everything except Hatfield House. So they asked for a quiet visit of two days and a small party. It was given by the Salisburys at great inconvenience—for all their establishment had moved to town—and it ended as you know. The

Crown Prince and Princess were to have dined with me to-day! As it is, Princess Mary and Teck, the Duke of Cambridge, the Manchesters, Marlboros and Selina and some others come. I fear your kind present of venison must remain till next year.

I am glad the Queen of Cyprus[1] is getting more sensible.

Adieu! dear darling, and think often of

Your affectionate

B

On the eve of his departure he wrote a farewell note to Lady Chesterfield:

Private 10 Downing Street,
June 7th, 1878

Dear Darling,

I have only time to say "Good-bye."

Give me all your kind thoughts, and hopes, and wishes.

You have fed me to the last with infinite delicacies: not the least the produce of your unrivalled dairy. I will back Bretby butter even against Paris.

I shall sleep to-morrow at Calais and then to Bruxelles where I dine with the King, and then sleep at Cologne and next day at Berlin.

Adieu!

B

His farewell note to Lady Bradford was written on the day of his departure when the carriage was actually standing at the door:

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[1] A reference to Lady A. apparently. See Beaconsfield's letter to Lady Chesterfield of May 2nd, 1878, p. 215.

10 Downing Street,
June 8th, 1878

These are my last lines: the carriage is at the door. Your letter of this morning gave me some consolation. I count on your frequent writing. Anything about you and yours will always interest me, even at a Congress.

I hope you remembered the gentleman to whom I must have appeared so discourteous yesterday.

You will find Weston beautiful. I marvel whether I shall ever see it again! It is a place that always pleased me.

Adieu! adieu! though that is really the French for "God bless you."

Yours
With deep affection,
Beaconsfield

Lord Beaconsfield was away a little less than six weeks, during which time he played a dominant part at the Congress of Berlin, from which he returned with "Peace with honor," on July 16th. He described his experiences in a series of letters to Lady Bradford and Lady Chesterfield:

To Lady Bradford

Berlin,
June 15th, 1878

Your second letter reached me last night. It is a week to-day since I left England, and I will try to give you a condensed account of what has since occurred.

A capital passage and three days' travel brought me here. I slept at Calais, Bruxelles, and Cologne. At Bruxelles dined with the King: a banquet. I took down the Queen to dinner, an intelligent and pleasing person.

I arrived here at 8 o'clock. Lord Odo carried me to the Hotel Kaiserhof, a splendid one, where I have a large suite of apartments and good accommodation for Monty and two secretaries. Prince Bismarck sent to me immediately to propose an interview at my convenience. I felt the importance of seeing him before the others arrived, who were due on the morrow, and said, therefore, I would come to him that evening which I did at half past ten.

It was sixteen years since we met. I should not have recognised him. Then, he was a very tall man with black hair, a puggish nose and pallid face and a waist like a wasp. Now, he is a giant, his face ruddy, his locks and head silvery-white, and enormously stout; on the whole, however, a very effective appearance. Our conference was long; an hour and a quarter, and then interrupted by his being summoned to the Crown Prince.

The next day the Crown Prince received the plenipotentiaries for his father, the Emperor. The Palace is a real one, but all the grand salon and galleries are where starving poets used to live in the days of Queen Anne—the garrets. I think I had to ascend a flight, often broken though, of 150 steps. Fortunately for me the Master of the Ceremonies was as short-breathed as myself, and so there were many halts of the caravan. The etiquette very stiff and the attendance striking from the splendor of costumes and so on. The Crown Prince received myself and Salisbury at half past 3 and we were ushered into the Closet without any presentation. Nothing in the world is more natural and cordial than he is, and with good sense and among his senses a sense of humor. It was like a continuation of Hatfield. The other plenipotentiaries were appointed at four o'clock and each was presented to the Prince in the most formal manner by his resident Ambassador.

After the "gala" audience, as it is called, I had to pay a visit to the Crown Princess at her own palace; a very pretty one. This was a morning call and was very agreeable. She has been most kind to me in many ways. For instance, I found on my arrival a basket bouquet, so large that it almost covered the table, from Potsdam and in its interior a strawberry bed environed with orange flowers. In the evening I dined at the English Embassy.

On the following day (Thursday) the Congress met: we were in uniform, but I believe this ceremony is not necessarily repeated. The hall is, I think, too large for business. At least, no one's voice except my own was, I understand, heard.

The Royal and Imperial "Gala" Banquet afterwards at the Palace was by far the most effective and splendid thing of the kind I ever witnessed. It was in the White-hall; of great size and proportion and splendor.

I sate opposite the Crown Prince and Princess next to Count Andrassy, who was next to Prince Bismarck, and on my right hand was Schouvaloff. All the Prussian Royal family were there, so numerous that they filled one side of the chief table. The Duke of Connaught and his fiancée absent, in consequence of the death of King of Hanover. After the "Gala" Banquet, and they say there has not been so splendid a one for half a century, there was an assemblage of the guests in the great gallery. It was a truly gorgeous scene. I was presented to many persons of whom

I had long heard; the Grand Duchess of Baden who was with the Emperor when he was shot, a very pleasing person, and her husband apparently not unworthy of her, and Princes without end, among them "The Red Prince," Prince Charles the future father-in-law of Connaught. . . .

At five o'clock I go to Potsdam to stay at the new Palace with the Crown Prince and Princess.

I will try, if possible, to keep the thread of my life—but on Monday the Conference reassembles.

Adieu!

B

Neues Palais, Potsdam,
June 16th, 1878

I snatch a moment to send you a few lines, and from this interesting place. I think I sketched affairs up to Thursday, and on the following day I had my audience of the Empress (Augusta) who lives in a very pretty palace, not so gorgeous as the greater ones, but furnished with lavish taste and full of pretty things. The Imperial victim was lying in it. In the evening I dined at the English Embassy and met the Russian and French Mission.

On Saturday Lord Salisbury and myself came down here on a visit, and a very agreeable one: no one except the Crown Princess and her immediate suite. Even our intended host was detained at Berlin until this afternoon, when he comes down and presides over a banquet to be given to the English Mission, at which all the members of the Imperial family and their "courts" will attend.

Yesterday we dined a party of eight; our hostess most animated and entertaining; she is extremely clever and

A BUST OF LORD BEACONSFIELD AT WESTON

seems to know everything. Her second son, whom I think I mentioned to you, was there; he is a companion for Lord Cranborne who is with his father, and who, I should think, has seen more of life than most boys of seventeen.

This is the last palace probably that was built in the Rococo style: about 120 years ago. Lord Malmesbury mentions it in his journal as the most hideous structure that ever shocked the earth—Rococo was then out of fashion and Lord Malmesbury built Heron Court, I suppose, to teach us how to live. I like Rococo for Palaces; this reminded me a little of the palace at Wurtzburg which I always thought the model of the style. This one is covered externally with pilasters and crowned and niched in every part with statues. Its interior wonderful for tapestry and golden ceilings and carving and gilding, and amber and silver chairs and black and onyx and lapis lazuli cabinets.

But the great sight was our visit next day to the famous *Sans Souci,* which is kept up worthy of its great founder. The gardens of endless terraces and fountains wanted sun; but the dwelling itself was truly charming and interesting. I was struck by the library of Frederick which has never been disturbed and was very characteristic of him.

I have most beautiful apartments here, and in my bedroom, which is painted and gilt all over, the Crown Prince was born. I have fires in every room; and there are strict orders that I am not to walk, or stand on the marble floors which abound. "Mamma" has evidently given very strict orders, etc.

17th

The Crown Prince yesterday came into my room before dinner and I had a long conversation with him. He came down in a special train with forty guests (Monty among them). He gave a banquet to the English Mission and to all the Prussian Imperial family. It was a fine sight. A wonderful Rococo hall! I sate next to the fiancée of our English Prince, the Duke of Connaught on her other side. I had an opportunity, which I had not before, of making observations, which I did like one of our correspondents. She has much charm and is absolutely pretty. A fine brow, beautiful eyes, a short upper lip, and transcendent hands! She is not shy, though modest, speaks to the purpose, asks pertinent questions in good taste as to her future home.

We all returned in a special train; for Monday was a busy day. It was a Congress day, but Congress *en grande tenue* is the least of our labors. It is the interviews and private councils where the work is done. It is only registered in Congress.

This brings us down to the end of the 16th.

Yours ever,

B

Berlin,
June 23rd, 1878

I wanted to keep you tolerably *au courant* of my life here, but I have so much to do, so many persons to see, so many papers to write, have to talk, scribble, and think so much, that it has been impossible. I can't even recollect where it was we last stopped. I think on my return to Potsdam last Monday. I hope I gave you some account of my visit there.

On that Monday of my return there was Congress and a grand banquet at Bismarck's; I sate on his right hand, and though he ate and drank a great deal, he talked as much:

most entertaining and picturesque; a sweet and gentle voice striking from such an ogre-looking body, and recklessly frank. Then there have been other banquets: notably one at the Italian Ambassador's: but talking of dinners, the most interesting by far was my dinner with Bismarck alone. Affairs were rather critical here and I was engaged at a "banquet" at the English Embassy, when he called on me—though he never calls on anyone—and after some time proposed that, if not engaged, I should dine with him alone and talk over matters.

He was in the bosom of his family who are interesting and devoted to him: the Princess, a daughter, 2 sons, and a married niece, pretty. After dinner he and I retired and smoked. It is the last blow to my shattered constitution, but had I refrained from smoking I should have made no way. So we spent a couple of memorable hours.

Affairs are progressing here and well.

Yours ever,

B

Berlin,
June 26th, 1878

The weather is so hot, and what I have to do so much hotter, that the day I last wrote to you has been melted out of my brain, though I don't think it was very long ago.

This is a wondrous scene; life in its highest form; and the interest which *la haute assemblée* (our technical title) excites seems to increase every day.

Mine passes in attendance on the Congress; very severe—from two till five; and in interviews with the great guns which is far more important. Prince Gortchakoff re-appeared to-day, the first time since my great victory. He is the most courteous gentleman, quite caressing, and it is quite painful to me to occasion him so much annoyance; particularly as he tells me he only came to the Congress to make my acquaintance. Frances Anne of Londonderry (of whom he was the lover) having always mentioned me in her letters, said she thought I should be Minister, and if so, hoped we should be friends. And, now, we meet under such terrible and trying circumstances.

Count Andrassy is a very picturesque gentleman. I have gained him quite and he supports me in everything. In fact the Northern Alliance is broken up.

Schouvaloff fights a difficult and lone battle with marvellous talent and temper. He is a first-rate parliamentary debater, never takes a note, and yet in his reply never omits a point.

Bismarck soars above all; he is six foot four I should think, proportionately stout; with a sweet and gentle voice and with a peculiarly refined enunciation which singularly and strangely contrasts with the awful things he says, appalling from their frankness and their audacity. He is a complete despot here, and from the highest to the lowest, the Prussians and all the permanent foreign diplomacy tremble at his frown and court most sedulously his smile. He loads me with kindnesses, and though often preoccupied, with an immediate dissolution of Parliament on his hands, an internecine war with the socialists, hundreds of whom he puts daily into prison in defiance of all law, he yesterday exacted from me a promise that before I depart I will once more dine with him quite alone. His palace has large and beautiful gardens. He has never been out since I came here, except the memorable day when he called on me to ascertain whether my policy was an ultimatum. I convinced him it was and the Russians surrendered a few hours afterwards.

The weather here is a Midsummer night's dream. Banquets and receptions every day and eve—but they don't clash with each other, as the hours are earlier and the dinners though sumptuous, are not long. People go to the theatre in the interval, or drive in the Thier-garten, which is a vast and most beautiful park, half forest; 1,500 acres in size, which is exactly double of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens together.

Reading over these hurried lines I see I omitted to tell you why Bismarck never goes out, but I must keep it for another time.

Monty, to my great joy, keeps well and is of immense use to me.

Yours ever,

B

To Lady Chesterfield

Berlin,
June 28th, 1878

I really have so much to do, so much to write, so much to say, and so much to think about, that letters to my friends are impossible.

We have gained a great victory here, the extent of which is hardly yet understood in England—so far, at least, as I can judge from the papers. All about the ultimatum sent by the Emperor of Russia insisting on the relinquishment of Sofia, etc. etc. etc., is utter trash. No one, when the line or the Balkans was carried, ever questioned that we were to have Sofia, and Russia has never made a remark on the subject. If we give up Sofia to Bulgaria, it will only be because your friend, Mehemet Ali, does not much value it and wants to exchange it for something else; but nothing on this point is settled.

This is a fine city, though often and, indeed, generally criticised—I think unjustly. Its public buildings and palaces and hotels are much finer than anything we have, and its streets have an air of architectural splendor, though they want the population of London, which is, after all, the great charm of cities.

The attendance on Congress itself, though we meet now almost daily, is not very severe; for our seances do not average more than 2 or 3 hours. But the work in the intervals, the real work, the interviews, the particular meetings, what in England we should call Committees, are very trying—and unceasing, though interesting, labor.

The people are very hospitable, and there are banquets and receptions every day and night. I try to avoid the latter, but it is difficult, as it is the habit to transact a good deal of business in this way.

I passed a couple of days at Potsdam with the Crown Prince and Princess, and was much amused with that cluster of Palaces and that Paradise of Rococo.

The weather is very hot and Prince Bismarck sighs for Kissingen, which may shorten our labors. I am delighted with the prospect, after all, of our having a fine harvest in England.

I must now prepare for Congress which meets in half an hour, and I think we shall have rather a difficult day. We have plenty of breakers ahead.

Adieu! dear darling, and give me your kind thoughts.

Yours ever,

B

To Lady Bradford

Berlin,
July 6th, 1878

Your letters make me very uneasy about yourself—as I know you always understate a case, especially when you are yourself concerned. Pray, if you are not better, send me a telegram.

The great change in the weather has not done me any good and I am rather suffering from my old chest foe. But the life here is terribly hard, and unless it ends in another week as all hope, and some say it will, I hardly know what will become of me. I have had to dine out every day this week, and longish meetings of Congress every day except Thursday.

Monday the Turkish Ambassador gave us a dinner. Some were prepared to sneer at it; but it was inferior to no diplomatic banquet, and had some features of its own in the shape of real pilaws, which pleased everybody. The whole thing was well done with becoming state and admirable attendance.

Tuesday Austria feasted us, and I sate between the Countess Carolyi and the Princess of Radziwill, who is not twenty and has four children. She is pretty with the oriental Polish eye, very chattery and amusing, and was a great heiress. I think I mentioned the Countess Carolyi before to you. She has a chance of being Ambassadress in England, where she will succeed. Her husband I am sure you must remember, as he was many years with us in the days of the Dandies, and I believe is the only living foreigner who is a member of Whites, of which he is as proud as of his Golden Fleece. His wife is one of the greatest ladies here, very pretty, most unaffected, and irreproachable.

On Wednesday all the plenipotentiaries dined with Baron Bleichroder, the Rothschild of Berlin, who lives in a palace more sumptuous than you can well conceive. We dined in a hall of many marbles with a wondrous band in a golden gallery, and after dinner repaired through many salons to a Ball-room without dancers but worthy, in its size and decoration, of the banqueting hall.

On Friday I dined with the Minister of State, Von Bülow; a smaller and more dramatic party; but agreeable. And yesterday I dined with Prince Bismarck quite alone.

Now I am going to the Congress. It is one of the most critical days we have yet had to encounter.

Lady Salisbury arrived two days ago with all her children, and is now going to pay me a visit—which is unfortunate for I am busy and anxious.

Good-bye!

Yours ever, and earnestly hoping you are better,

B

To Lady Chesterfield

Berlin,
July 7th, 1878

I count on reaching London about Monday or Tuesday week and hope to bring with me, signed and sealed, a

Treaty of Peace of which the Country will not be ashamed, and which will secure the tranquillity for a long time of regions in which we are deeply interested.

The weather here continues broken and cold and ungenial, and I am suffering from my old foe in my chest; but it is useless to complain. I am however trying to nurse a little and have sent an excuse to Potsdam, where I was to have passed the day with the Crown Prince and Princess.

If we execute the Treaty, as I expect, next Thursday, the Congress will have sate a month, and compared with others it has been an expeditious one; but if it had lasted two months it would have finished me.

But nothing but business and exertion await me at home, as I daresay they will not give me 8 and 40 hours before they begin debating in the House of Lords.

Adieu! dear darling. I hope you are well. Selina, alas! is not.

Yours ever,

B

Immediately on his arrival in London Lord Beaconsfield wrote to Lady Bradford—"Quarter past two. Just arrived. How are you? Will call upon you after House of Lords." He was so pressed for time that he was unable to report himself to the Queen before speaking in the House of Lords. "Now I am off to Osborne," he told Lady Chesterfield on the 20th, "for I have not paid my *devoirs* to my Sovereign, and according to etiquette I ought to have had my audience before I made my statement in the House of Lords." Two days later he wrote from Osborne to Lady Bradford:

July 22nd, 1878

I hope you are getting on well. I am not quite sure that I shall be able to leave this to-morrow, which I much wish to do, as I do not like to be absent when there is a hostile Motion in the House of Commons, on the tapis—but there is some domestic business which may keep me.

At three o'clock I am to be invested with the Garter: a sort of ceremony I fear. Garter himself is hourly expected, but Leopold, who was to have assisted at the Investiture, is ill at Windsor. If any change occurs I shall telegraph to you; otherwise I shall hope to see you when I call to-morrow afternoon.

Ever yours,

B

He naturally wrote with satisfaction of his reception by the nation. "Last Saturday was a great effort," he told Lady Chesterfield, referring to the banquet given in his honour by the City of London, and the conferring upon him of the freedom of the City, "for I was suffering all the time, but managed to fulfil my task. All the way from Charing Cross to Guildhall there was a host, an enthusiastic multitude; the Guildhall itself one of the finest sights of the kind I ever remember. It was a much more striking business than the Mansion House Banquet. This speaking with the asthma has brought back my bronchitis and I have got to make another oration to-day; but that I hope will close all things for a good while." Later in the day he described this function to Lady Bradford, and then went on to tell her his social news:

10 Downing Street,
August 6th, 1878

A terrible day and I can scarcely save the post. Nearly a thousand Conservative associations, represented by 700 Deputies, waited on Salisbury and myself at F.O. to-day, and we had to shake hands with every one as they passed. More exhausting than a Levee, and then quite wearied, to address them afterwards.

Monty and I are going to the play to-night to see some nonsense, which everybody is going to see—*Parasol* or *Pinafore*—a burlesque—a sort of thing I hate; but I got into the scrape on Sunday at Holland House with Princess Mary. She is Patroness and we go to her box.

Yesterday's dinner was amusing, as Louise looked her best and talked her best. I sate on her right hand and Duke of Cambridge on her left and Harty-Tarty not too near with Lady Westmorland, the only other lady there. Louise talked a good deal about you, and pretends to love you very much—and I hope she is sincere. She does not think you look as well as she could wish, and wished you would take more care of yourself and lead a quiet life. But who can lead a quiet life with two daughters to attend to!

The Duke of Bedford has come down adequately—I don't know how much—and Odo[2] is to be a peer.

Yours ever,

B

Pinafore did not please him, for in a letter to Lady Bradford on August 8th he wrote—"Except at Wycombe fair in my youth, I have never seen anything so bad as *Pinafore.* It was not even a burlesque; a sort of provincial *Black-eyed Susan.* 'Marie's' face spoke volumes of disgust and disappointment; but who could have told her to go there?" Above all things he craved rest. "I am quite exhausted and shall try after Saturday's Cabinet to get down to Hughenden for a day or two," he wrote. "The Faery has commanded me to Osborne on the 18th, to stay till Wednesday. This is unfortunate as it prevents repose, for it is difficult to get to Osborne from Hughenden. I want to go to bed for a week, or lie on the summer grass if it would not rain." And on August 10th—"Dr. Kidd sent me out of town to-day; but that was impossible. I do go, however, on Monday. All I want, I fancy, is quiet and fresh air. We had a Cabinet to-day which lasted more than three hours—the longest I ever knew. But it was our last, and besides the Queen's speech to settle there were all sorts of odds and ends that required notice." Lady Bradford had detected, apparently, a note of criticism somewhere in the *Times.* Beaconsfield was annoyed that she of all persons should question the tone of whole-hearted approval in which the leading journal had welcomed his achievements—"What can you mean about the *Times?* The Liberals are frantic with what they call its base adulation of your humble servant."

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[2] Lord Odo Russell, British Ambassador in Berlin. On reconsideration he declined the peerage.

At last, on August 12th, he found it possible to leave London, and he at once notified Lady Bradford of his departure:

10 Downing Street,
August 12th, 1878

I wished to believe your bulletin favorable, but am not too satisfied with it. I saw Anne yesterday and she complained a little, but had seen her doctor, otherwise I had thought her very well.

This is my last letter from D.S. which I leave in half an hour for Hughenden, where I hope to be stationary; except the Osborne visit this day week. I was commanded on the 18th inst. (Sunday) but struck, as I am sure there would be unnecessary, disagreeable paragraphs in the papers about my Sunday travelling. Monty is going with me to Osborne. He is now with his brother, but where that is I never can make out, or why his brother retired from the F.O. if, instead of living in Ireland with his father-in-law, he dwells in a hired house in some English county.

Roebuck, I think I told you, is to be sworn of the Privy Council on Wednesday.

When I called yesterday on your sister, there was not a single person visible either in her street or Berkeley Square; this will give you some idea of the loneliness of London. . . .

I heard from Lady Forester yesterday from Homburg. She had met the Crown Prince and Princess there, who seem to have spoken much of the Berlin Congress; so she reported immediately to me, congratulating me on my Garter and my "realising all the dreams of my life and castles not in the air."

Pretty good!

Yours ever,

B

CHAPTER XII

August–December 1878

A TROUBLED AUTUMN

If it was solitude that Beaconsfield wanted he was eminently successful in satisfying his desire. Of his letter to Lady Bradford apprising her of his arrival at Hughenden, he wrote on August 16th—"It was not worth receiving; and this must be still dryer and flatter. I was then a hermit and in solitude and two days more have now elapsed and I have seen and spoken to no one. . . . Even my clergyman who has over-ritualised himself and wants repose, is away and in Scotland. Perhaps you may meet him." And he concluded his letter on the same note on which he began it—"I rejoice you are better; I am in a state of apathy, but it is not unpleasant after the agitated past." He managed nevertheless to find one entertaining piece of news to send:

> The *Lively,* an ancient steamer and very slow, came to Osborne the day after the Review with Admiral Sir Cowper Key and two other Admirals and eighteen Captains of the Fleet who could not be presented to the Queen the day of the Review. They arrived three quarters of an hour too late, and then ran into the *Alberta* in the harbor; and re-

turning ran ashore, and the Queen was obliged to send the *Elfin* to their assistance, or they would have been unable to return. "So much," somebody writes, "for twenty-one of the best naval officers!"

The peace and solitude of Hughenden were interrupted by his summons to Osborne, from where he wrote a spirited account of his visit:

To Lady Bradford

Osborne,
August 20th, 1878

Your amusing and agreeable letter of the 18th was put in my hands as I passed through London yesterday on my way to this place. It was a charming *compagnon de voyage.*

The Grand Duke and Duchess of Hesse[1] are here, or rather were, for they departed this morning. I sate next to her at dinner. The Prince of Wales invited me to lunch on board his yacht to-day, to meet the King and Queen of Denmark and to talk over some matters with me. I sent the letter to the Queen, as I am in attendance on her Majesty and might—and probably, had I accepted the invitation, would—have been absent at the very moment I was required. The Queen took this view of the case and I had to write to Prince Hal accordingly. This led to another letter from H.R.H. to Her Majesty, which arrived in the middle of dinner and which begged Her Majesty to release me from my attendance. The Queen would not listen to it, and sent a message by the Grand Duke, who after dinner repaired to the yacht to play whist, that Her Majesty did not approve of my going in an open boat to the yacht, etc. etc. I understand this morning a mezzo-termine has been suggested by H.R.H.; that I should meet him and the Princess at luncheon at the lodgings of the King and Queen of Denmark, at two o'clock. How this great question is to be decided, remains a mystery. The puissant warriors are fighting over my body.

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[1] Princess Alice, second daughter of Queen Victoria.

The Hereditary Grand Hesse has just left the room. He was sent to show himself to me; a nice little boy; not handsome, but good-looking enough for a male; with frank and natural manners.

Monty calculates that he shall see you on Friday. He is in high favor, but is supposed not to be looking very well. He is himself beginning to sigh a little and complain, but that only means that he wants to get to "Caledonia stern and wild." I know his symptoms now very well. As for myself, I cannot give a very good bulletin—but I have hopes from a tolerably quiet life and complete solitude, which will be my lot for many months.

Adieu!

Yours ever,

B

That the after effects of the visit were unfortunate is clear from a letter written to Lady Chesterfield on his return to Hughenden:

Hughenden Manor,
August 25th, 1878

Dear Darling,

I must write you a little line, though it is a great effort for me to write and would be so if I had anything to say; but I have nothing. I returned from Osborne where we had a sufficiently agreeable visit on Monday, and it has never ceased thundering until this morning when the air is bright and still though very damp, and the glass will not rise a bit.

I am extremely unwell, having the bronchitis worse than ever. It exhausts and disgusts me with life; going to Osborne did me harm, as I knew it would. The slightest social excitement injures me, but the visit was inevitable and the Queen is greatly disappointed that I did not go for a fortnight to Balmoral! It was impossible. My only hope is in a very, very quiet life, solitude, regular hours, and no talking. I am now quite alone and, therefore, ought to ensure the latter condition.

Monty went from Osborne to Scotland and I don't expect to see him again for months. I have given orders that none of my other Secretaries and no messenger, except on urgent and critical business, shall come near me.

The French Ambassador, whom otherwise I like very well, is unfortunately my neighbor. He has taken for the season Sir W. Clayton's house, Harleyford, near Marlow. He has paid me one visit, and had it not been for unceasing thunderstorms yesterday he would have paid me another, bringing Mme. d'Harcourt and his son, the famous private Secretary (once) of the Marshal, to luncheon. All this is dreadful to me. I see no chance of reaching you in

September, or, indeed, of ever visiting again at châteaux; I have not vital strength for it.

We lunched on Tuesday at West Cowes with the King and Queen of Denmark and Princess Thyra who, they said, was going to marry the French Pretender; but there is no truth in it. The Prince and Princess of Wales were there—a little room which hardly held eight, but with a charming view. The original plan was to have lunched on board the Prince's yacht; but the Queen would not let me go on the water and Her Majesty had her way, so the mountain came to Mahomet and we lunched in a King's lodgings.

Adieu!

B

In reply to a letter from Lady Bradford he gave an account of his daily life at Hughenden:

August 29th, 1878

You asked me where I generally lived. In my workshop in the morning and always in the library in the evening. Books are companions even if you don't open them. . . . I am called every day at seven o'clock when my bag and general letters arrived. I get through all these and find myself in my cabinet by nine o'clock and work very well till the second post comes in at noon, which always disturbs me for it brings the newspapers which are fortunately dull enough but which must be looked at. I make my chief meal at two, and an hour afterwards get out when it is not a thunderstorm; but that generally rages here and the new moon of yesterday has brought us nothing but fresh showers.

He noticed a change in the habits of society in the neighbourhood of his home, on which he commented in a letter to Lady Bradford on September 1st—". . . partridge shooting is getting quite obsolete here. I cannot believe it is the land of my youth when the first of September was the beginning of a sort of Carnival. I suppose it's grouse and agricultural improvements that have done it all; but the birds have half disappeared and nobody seems to care for the other moiety." Company still irked him and social obligations weighed heavily upon him:

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
September 5th, 1878

I hope this may catch you at Lamington. Yesterday, I really think through your letter—but I had been brooding over the affair for a week—I summoned my utmost energies and returned the Harcourts' visit. Harleyford is on the river and the most beautiful part of the river. Something of the Clieveden class; the place, not the house, which is old-fashioned, red-bricked, and everything which a villa on the banks of a beautiful river or lake should not be. I was praying and believing they would not be at home all my journey, but they were. However, it is done.

I had been a week in perfect solitude speaking to nobody and seeing nobody, and had felt the benefit of it. I found on my return home messengers waiting from the Faery, Salisbury and Mr. Turnor. It's always so. I went away the very day I ought to have stayed at home!

The Duke of Somerset has also called on me. It is not fair. Can he count as a neighbor? Bulstrode must be fourteen miles away! This terribly depresses me and will bring on a reaction.

. . . I really have nothing to tell you. Solitude mitigates my sufferings and I have nearly got rid of my bronchitis; but any social excitement, anything which breaks the mechanical regularity of my habits, upsets me in a moment. Yesterday I was obliged to have Mr. Turnor down to transact business till four o'clock when I bid him adieu with a blessing and a hope I should never see him, or any other secretary, again—when I again heard the sound of chariot wheels, and there was the 1st Lord of the Admiralty who had driven over 18 miles and was obliged to see me.

I thought I should have sunk under it, and it led to great labors all of which I had to accomplish myself. I fear, also, that I shall be otherwise troubled, as Salisbury has come over! This bodes business!

Remember me very kindly to Lady Scarbrough and to any of her daughters who may be at Sandbeck.

Ever yours,

B

Lord Salisbury not only came over on the 7th, but returned on the 10th:

Hughenden Manor,
September 12th, 1878

I have hardly a moment to write and if I had my eyes are so worn, my head so weak and my hand so paralysed from constant scribble that I could not avail myself of the occasion, were the messenger not pressing me.

THE EARL OF BEACONSFIELD

From a photograph taken at Osborne by command of the Queen in 1878

Lord Salisbury came down here on Tuesday and left the following morning, affairs being most pressing; but as for myself, I have not had a moment since, even for meals or sleep—so much to do and so much coming.

It is worse than the Congress.

What is happening in Bosnia is what we expected and what we sent Austria there, always too slow, to prevent. If it had fallen to Turkey it would have finished her. I hope we shall be able to put Afghanistan all right. But there is Turkish bankruptcy to deal with and the Greek business.

Duchess Louise brought me a *souvenir* from the Continent; a Congress *Souvenir*. Did you observe your friend was *decoré?* Yes, you did; but F.O. and the profession are frantic about it; "against all rules," and so on.

Adieu! adieu!

B

In spite of the pressure of work he had little to fall back on for recreation, except his library—"I read the *Midsummer's Night Dream* the other day," he mentioned on September 20th, "and discovered that all the incidents took place on May night, preliminary to the celebration of May Day. Why then its misleading title? Another vulgar error." And this in the midst of a month of daily troubles and anxieties:

Hughenden Manor,
September 23rd, 1878

Affairs are very critical and confused, but I think I shall control them. They have been so, more or less, the whole month which has been one of unceasing thought and labor. It is impossible to summon the Cabinet, which would agitate all Europe; but I am here (all scattered) with my Secretary of Foreign Affairs at Dieppe and my Secretary of State for India at Balmoral, so that constant communications are even physically laborious.

I am glad to hear about Dorothy.[2] Mr. Nevill's property was mainly personal I fancy; that is always a mystery. The origin of his fortune was a cadet of the house of Walpole, who was a Lombard Street Banker in the days of Mr. Pitt and left Nevill, who was his nephew, £200,000; no slight sum in those days, but in the present, about the figure with which the Rothschilds cut off their rebellious offspring.

Yours ever,

B

Hughenden Manor,
September 27th, 1878

. . . I did not read Twitter's[3] speech, or any comments upon it. I have so much to do that, though I see all the papers every day, I only read them for business and can generally despatch them in half an hour. I am not in a state of consternation about Afghanistan and if anything annoys me more than another it is our Cape affairs, when every day brings forward a new blunder of Twitters.

The man he swore by was a Sir T. Shepstone, whom he looked upon as heaven-born for the object in view. We sent him out entirely for Twitter's sake, and he has managed to quarrel with English, Dutch and Zulus—and now he is obliged to be recalled; but not before he has brought on, I fear, a new war. Froude was bad enough and has cost us a million, this will be worse. So much for Twitters. . . .

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[2] Lady Dorothy Nevill.

[3] Lord Carnarvon.

"The chances are that we must have a November meeting of Parliament," he wrote on October 1st. "That is, indeed, a calamity." And on the 2nd—"I hardly know when I wrote to you; I am distracted with so many things and have so much to do. The Cabinet is summoned for Saturday morning next." The meeting of the Cabinet was a protracted one:

To Lady Chesterfield

Hughenden Manor,
October 5th, 1878

Dear Darling,

My letters must be very short, because I write very often and have nothing to say. I see no one and hear no gossip, or authentic tales of things impossible—but which nevertheless amuse in a letter. I have no time to amuse anyone and have had more business these two months of what is called relaxation, than at any period of my life.

Yesterday I went up to the Cabinet which was a very long one, so I could not see Lady Ely who had the Queen's commands to see me. "Dearest Jane" is going for a holiday to the Continent.

I was obliged to hurry off to Hughenden as I have no home in London, the painters being in possession of Downing Street.

Monty, after two months' absence, returns to-morrow. He was, I understand, going to Cyprus with three of the Cabinet, War, Colonies and Admiralty, but in consequence of the critical state of affairs they are obliged to relinquish their projected spree, so if he goes Monty must go alone.

Yours ever,

B

Lord Odo Russell, whose services at the Congress of Berlin Lord Beaconsfield had wished to recognise with a peerage, and who had at first expressed pleasure at this prospect, ended by declining the honour—"The Whigs won't let poor Odo Russell take the peerage I gave him! He is in a sad way. The Duke of Bedford had promised to endow him; and I suspect it is an excuse to get out of a rash promise." Thus to Lady Bradford; a few days later he wrote at greater length upon the subject to Lady Chesterfield:

Hughenden Manor,
October 15th, 1878

Dear Darling,

Things are so ticklish that I see little chance of the Bradfords coming here, which they once talked of; and I have made up my mind to go off with Monty to-morrow to Weston, as I see no hope of otherwise seeing Selina this year. I expect a telegram will immediately call me back to town, but I can't help it.

As Downing Street is in the hands of the workpeople and full of paint which kills me always, Monty has lent me his house in S. Audley Street for the November Cabinets; it is an agreeable arrangement, as Mayfair is a quarter I most like. It is refined and gay, even when nobody is there to say that to.

The Odo Russells have been paying me a little visit to explain why they do not take the peerage which they had gratefully accepted. And a Secretary of State in difficulties proposed to come down on the same day, so I had what is called a party from Saturday to Monday early morn. I was obliged to leave my guests yesterday before they were up, to go off to Quarter Sessions at Aylesbury which begin at eleven o'clock, and I have 14 miles to get over.

The Duke of Bedford had approved of his brother accepting the peerage and had promised to endow it, but now, after the Queen has been informed of all this, he declares off on the plea that a Russell cannot accept a peerage from a Tory Government, though a peerage for public service, winning a battle, or signing a treaty, involves no political relations with the Minister on whose advice it is conferred.

The income of the Duke tops £300,000 per annum and he says the happiest day of his life is when he feels he has saved a five pound note!

All this *entre nous.*

Yours ever,

B

To Lady Bradford he confided that Foreign Affairs need never have become so critical if his orders had not been disobeyed.

October 10th, 1878

. . . Monty has gone up to town to-day and will see Lord Cranbrook who is also there to-day and I hope will succeed in sending him down here. It is terrible for all of us to be so scattered. This critical state of affairs need not have happened and would not have, if my order had not been disobeyed. This makes it more grievous. I wrote to you a month ago I should think, that I hoped that I had settled the Afghan business; but alas! I did not reckon on distant and headstrong counsels.

Before the end of October Beaconsfield contrived a flying visit to Lady Chesterfield at Bretby. "Our hostess shows no sign of decreasing energy," he told Lady Bradford, "and is learning to play the organ and building a park wall! Either of them is a sufficient incident for a life." The visit was necessarily brief and much interrupted:

October 23rd, 1878

I hope our visit has not disappointed her; but telegrams have kept us in a continual fret. And we have felt always as if we ought to go off like Gambetta in a balloon. I shall get to Hughenden (D.V.) this afternoon, and come up early on Friday for a Cabinet at twelve. Write to me directed to Downing Street, and I shall get your letter on my arrival. I shall return to Hughenden the same afternoon and then we shall meet on Saturday.

At the beginning of November Beaconsfield went to Hatfield—"I came down here on Friday and have done much business," he wrote on November 4th. But, "I sigh for my crust of bread and liberty," he added, "and return to town to-morrow." Back in London the Prime Minister so far took chances with his health as to attend one or two dinner parties. "I dined on Wednesday at Lady Marian's,[4] a farewell dinner to the beautiful Louise and Lorne."[5] The house was terribly cold; but "I got home and drenched myself with hot cognac and water, and was not so much injured on the morrow as I expected." A day or two later another farewell dinner—this time at the Lornes'. The house was carefully warmed and the dinner—though Beaconsfield did not dare partake of it—"exquisite." The party small but amusing. "Master Leopold[6] was there in his blue ribbon and full of talk." Beaconsfield sat between his hostess and the Prince. "Leopold ate too many truffles which he was particularly ordered not to touch. They were served up in a bowl swimming in champagne sauce. Lorne the most genial of hosts, and directed his conversation much to your humble servant, who could not keep up the ball—for I never for a moment understood what he was talking about."

After these excursions there was another political triumph to be chronicled:

South Audley Street,
November 11th, 1878

There is hardly a moment, but I hope I may find a little time to-morrow.

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[4] Lady Marian Alford.

[5] The Marquess of Lorne had just been appointed Governor-General of Canada.

[6] H.R.H. Prince Leopold, afterwards Duke of Albany.

Saturday was a great, I might say, a complete success. The party is what is called on its legs again and triumphant! In a very mixed assembly as Guildhall ever is, there was enthusiasm as far as concerned me, not merely cheering, but rising in their places of a 1,000 guests and waving of kerchiefs and all that, napkins included.

My voice was queer in the morning, but remedies got it all right and the Lord Chancellor says it was never more powerful or clear. All our people, all people, and the foreign Ambassadors especially in high spirits. Quite ashamed to write this egotistical trash which is only for your dear eyes.

B

Before November was more than half-way through, Lord Beaconsfield found himself in his chronic state of being without a secretary:

To Lady Chesterfield

South Audley Street,
November 16th, 1878

He can only send you a little line, being pressed to death with affairs. Now he is going to Sandringham, a cold journey to a dull house. The Faery has just telegraphed that she does not approve of my going in such rough boisterous weather—"most imprudent." So it is, but remember last year when I declined and went somewhere else,[7] which did not please particularly. The Princess Louise and Lorne are detained by a heavy gale at Lough Foyle and there is also "terrible anxiety about darling grandchildren," who have all got diphtheria.

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[7] To Weston.

I am fairly well, but with a war in Africa, a war in Asia and something worse in Southern Europe, one's nervous system ought to give way. Monty's does and he is going to desert me again, which is a trouble.

Adieu! dear Darling; I hope you are well.

Yours ever,

B

To Lady Bradford

South Audley Street,
November 16th, 1878

. . . My living room is the drawing room here and my bedroom his sister's, all on the same floor; so I am very comfortable. I keep house, but my host, or my guest, will not stay with me many hours. He has a return of his mysterious complaint which always comes on at this period of the year, and the only cure for it is shooting the coverts of the Grange and some other places. He can't carry on my correspondence, but can only write every day to Lady I. and Lady B. and, of course, his aunt and a good many other ladies. But I say all this only to you. He has so many admirable qualities that we can only regret the state of his nervous system, which demands constant air, exercise, and all the company of charming women. Mr. Algernon Turnor is hunting, having his holiday, and Jem Daly, who is at the helm in Downing Street, is ill, so I am not exactly in cue for a crowd of Cabinet Councils, a war in Africa, one in Asia and something worse than war in

Eastern Europe; but I must see what I can do, being myself pretty well . . .

Adieu! adieu!

B

The party at Sandringham was agreeable, though the death of the little Princess, daughter of the Grand Duke and Duchess of Hesse, threw a gloom over it. "The Prince was to have gone yesterday to shoot at Sudborne, and Sir Richard[8] had bought a whole room at Paris for his Royal guest and laid out more than £4,000 in furniture; and of course he could not go." The saddest man of the party was "poor Buest. He is terribly cut up in leaving England; but if a man can recover his spirits anywhere it is, surely, Paris." The question agitating the minds of the Prime Minister and his colleagues at the moment was whether or not it was necessary to summon Parliament:

November 19th, 1878

The Cabinet meets to-morrow and will have to decide whether Parliament is to be summoned. It is vexatious, for the reason is only technical; for though the language of the Act of Parliament is ambiguous, I can't help feeling myself that an interpretation favorable to not meeting might be fairly given to it. There are some, however, who fancy that the cry of the Opposition of our governing without Parliament may take the fears and fancy of John Bull, who is sometimes apt to be hastily headstrong.

Ever yours,

B

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[8] Sir Richard Wallace.

A fairly cheerful letter to Lady Bradford on November 26th, was followed by one written in poor health to Lady Chesterfield on the 28th:

November 26th, 1878

. . . Schouvaloff has just been here and had his interview—a long one and to me satisfactory. I think we shall triumph in all quarters, and not only get our Berlin Treaty successfully carried into effect; but that the Ameer is what the Yankees call "a dead coon!" Your sister has had her doctor and complains of rheumatism in her wrist and hand; I think gout, but she prefers the other name.

To Lady Chesterfield

10 Downing Street,
November 28th, 1878

I can't come, my dear, for I am very indisposed. I could not go to the Council yesterday, or leave my room. The consequence is, I shall have to go down by another special train to Windsor, Saturday or Monday. And on Wednesday I must go there unless I am absolutely knocked up. And Thursday is Parl.!!!

I have been to the Cabinet to-day and have just returned, but can't venture to call on you—indeed I feel quite wearied.

It is entirely the dreadful atmosphere and these days, when night begins at four o'clock, that have knocked me up. I hope you are better. I heard from Selina to-day. A house more than full: no time to write; and yet I dare say she writes 20 letters every day.

Yours ever,

B

Writing to Lady Chesterfield on December 4th, he informed her that there was no news of General Roberts; but that the general feeling was, so far as Parliament was concerned, that there would now be no Amendment to the Address. This hope was unduly sanguine. The Opposition leaders decided at a late hour to move a vote of censure on the Government, and on December the 8th, Beaconsfield wrote to Lady Chesterfield—"You send me some good news, and I hear no bad. I think they will be well beaten in both houses, and then I shall get a little rest." Even in the House of Lords, which was thought to be the danger, the Government had a triumphant majority; and on December 15th, Beaconsfield summed up the position in a letter to Lady Bradford:

The Parliamentary campaign may be said to have ended. It lasted six weeks and I made three speeches. The first, at Guildhall, put an end to the silly stories about the failure of the Berlin Treaty. The others were the pitched battles in the Lords. I can truly say of all three—*veni, vidi, vici.*

Illness was rife amongst the members of the Royal family:

10 Downing Street,
December 12th, 1878

I could not write yesterday, being in a state of stupid exhaustion—much from want of sleep; but though I have had since a tolerable night, I can't say much for myself. I was obliged to go out to an early Cabinet; but have kept by my fireside since, the day being savagely inclement.

We go to Windsor on Saturday till Monday; i.e. if no tragedy occurs at Hesse. All the mischief was done by kissing. She broke to her little boy the news of his youngest sister's death, and he was so overcome that she took him up in her arms and embraced him—and perhaps her death! Travelling home, the Duchess of Edinburgh visited and kissed her and, no doubt, the Duchess of Edinburgh has kissed the Princess of Wales and others, since her arrival. How will it all end!

Yours ever,

B

The death of Princess Alice threw everything into confusion:

December 15th, 1878

This terrible death has thrown us into endless distress and confusion. Telegrams without end. Yesterday we were due at Windsor; but, of course, never intended to go. Then came a telegram that notwithstanding all that had occurred we were to go there to-day. Then ceaseless letters from "dearest Jane" ending with a command to go down on Tuesday next. Probably that will not take place. . . . When I return from Windsor I must depart from this place. If I go to Hughenden I think I shall remain there till Parliament reassembles. I am asked to Hatfield, but have settled nothing. Is there any chance of Bradford asking me to Weston? It is rather cool my making such an enquiry, but it is absolutely necessary that I should make my arrangements.

To Lady Chesterfield he wrote—"The distress is great from the highest to the lowest. . . . All the brothers are going to the funeral. The Prince of Wales is quite overcome. She was his favorite sister and nursed him in his illness. Indeed, she was the pearl of the family."

Lord Bradford welcomed the idea of a visit from the Prime Minister; but the London fogs proved too much for his fragile constitution and he was obliged to cancel the engagement. On his return from Windsor he found London in a black fog and could not breathe. "I am obliged to give up my visit to Weston," he told Lady Chesterfield, "and all others. I must go home to-morrow and nurse." To a gloomy letter he added a little whimsically—"The name of the new party; A.B.C.D. party. Aberdeen, Bath, Carnarvon and Derby!!!" He wrote more fully to Lady Bradford of his state of health and of the maelstrom of business in which he found himself caught up on the eve of his departure from London:

South Audley Street,
December 20th, 1878

Yesterday was a day of terrible pressure. A sudden Cabinet at half past 11; a Golden Casket Deputation at one; and then, after seeing many colleagues, an early audience at Windsor—i.e. six o'clock; so I could not write to you, which annoyed me.

And all this with a most oppressive attack of my great enemy which quite disqualified me for a royal audience, during which strictly, I believe, you may not even blow your nose! Nothing could be worse than going to Windsor, but it was inevitable and put off till the last moment. We arrived in London this morning in a black fog and I found alarming letters on my table, preparing me for the failure of banks, "another black Friday," and begging me to telegraph to the Chancellor of Exchequer, who, I believe, left London last night, that it may be necessary to suspend the Bank Charter. A pleasant Xmas! And my birthday to-morrow! And to-morrow Monty goes to Melbury,[9] though he writes to another lady every day and calls upon a third every day without exception. What a Don Juan! I had a long audience—more than an hour. H.M. was in complete mourning; her head-dress black. She was calm, extremely agreeable and occasionally amusing: she did not avoid the terrible subject, but treated it naturally and in some detail. She said she herself did not feel the shock more on account of the day it happened. On the contrary, if she had been able to choose a day for anything so sad, she would have preferred that it should have been on the anniversary of her greatest sorrow.

I have kept this open and would have wished to write more; but am busied, harassed and ill. London is as black as night. I am ordered out of town to-morrow and should have gone some days ago, but this Windsor visit hung over me.

Tell Bradford I shall thank him for his kind letter and write to him soon.

Your

B

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[9] The seat of Lord and Lady Ilchester.

It was, indeed, a sick man that travelled down to Hughenden, to a climate little suited to one so frail. "I got down here yesterday. A white world and has been, they tell me, for a week. Nearly four inches, I think, and it has been snowing all day." In such circumstances there was little to tempt him out of the house, even if his work had permitted leisure. "As always happens when I am alone, some most important and pressing business happened immediately. I have been writing since I rose, and now the sun is going to set. My back aches sadly. Nothing can be more severe than the weather and my sufferings are great." To Lady Chesterfield he wrote the next day, December 23rd—"I can only write to you a little line, to hope the Xmas season may bring you happiness. As for myself, I do not look for that; but should be grateful for a little health ere I finish my affairs." His Christmas letter to Lady Bradford was a quaint mixture of seriousness, irony, and pathos:

Hughenden Manor,
Xmas Day, 1878

I know you dislike anniversaries; so do I. Therefore, I will add nothing to my date, except my regret that I am not your companion.

It is not my throat that ails; it is my breast—and one always feels with complaints of this kind that we are in dangerous vicinage of the lungs. Hitherto, I have escaped in that department; but my present attack is a severe one and out-of-door life is almost impossible. This house is very warm; 3 or 4 years ago, I, though grumbling—for it cost a good deal—introduced warm airing. Now I am grateful for it. The snow is falling fast and thick on a crust of half a dozen inches. There only want snowballs to recall one's youth.

I have two Secretaries in London. Mr. Turnor, my hunting Secretary, is frost-bound. He has seven hunters! Private Secretaries are different from what they were in my days when I was Lord Lyndhurst's, and hunted in Vale of Aylesbury on one horse! At the hazard of my life! I could afford no more. Exactly thirty years afterwards when Lord Lonsdale was leaving the field, but did not like breaking up his stable at Tring, he offered me the complete control and enjoyment of his stud there—as long as I liked. But it was too late. Everything, they say, comes too late. It is something if it comes. However, I won't complain of life. I have had a good innings and cannot at all agree with the great King that all is Vanity.

Yours ever,

B

His last letter of the year to Lady Bradford touched upon a problem of grave and growing anxiety:

December 27th, 1878

You are right in supposing that the business which now takes up so much of my time is the general distress; but it is one most difficult to deal with. There are so many plans, so many schemes, and so many reasons why there should be neither plans nor schemes.

What I fear is that the Opposition, who will stick at nothing, may take up the theme for party purposes. If we then don't support them, we shall be stigmatised as unpatriotic; if we do they will carry all the glory. And yet —what is the cause of the distress? And if permanent, is there to be a permanent Committee of Relief? And the property of the nation to support the numbers of unemployed labor? Worse than Socialism. To hoist a flag of distress when there has been no visible calamity to account for it like a cotton famine, no bread and meat famine, no convulsion of nature, is difficult and may not be wise.

There are 1,000 other things to be said (on both sides)—but after all Starvation has no answer. You will see, however, how difficult is my present position with constant correspondence (and no Secs.) of equal and contradictory character—impossibility of calling a Cabinet, for that, at Xmas, would frighten the world—and everybody agreeing with nobody, but throwing the responsibility on my shoulders. . . .

His last letter to Lady Chesterfield, on the other hand, was written in a quizzical vein:

December 30th, 1878

. . . I thought you would escape from Weston, though hardly so soon. I dislike her but he is insipid.[10] Somebody offered him £50 for the original of the Bath letter which I wrote to him from Weston.[11] He stared, but said he had not kept it. He was worthy of the most famous State paper of modern times—and which destroyed a Ministry.

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[10] The reference was to Lord and Lady Grey de Wilton.

[11] See Vol. I, p. 311.

CHAPTER XIII

January–June 1879

TROUBLES IN EGYPT, SOUTH AFRICA AND AFGHANISTAN

For Lord Beaconsfield the year 1879 opened inauspiciously. He had been suffering from bronchitis "in its most aggravated form," as he described it to Lady Bradford, for a month, and found the greatest difficulty in throwing off the evil results of so prolonged an illness. "I see people die of it every day," he wrote on January 1st, "I don't see why I don't. Nobody can do any good. I have tried 'all schools of thought' as they say." And then lest she should be unduly worried by so pessimistic an account, he added on a separate sheet of paper—"My present physicians are, Dr. Solitude, Dr. Silence, Dr. Warmth, and two general practitioners, Regular Hours and Regular Meals. I mention this that you should not think I was neglected. I don't want any companion unless it were you." The New Year brought him a number of gifts from admirers, known and unknown. "On New Year's Day I had a graceful but mournful cadeau from Osborne. In a shrine-like frame, when I opened its gates, I found a portrait of the poor Princess[1] and her boy. It was made for the Queen during their last visit when I was there, and met her; and I am to keep it 'in memory of August 6.'" Among the gifts were several pairs of slippers, "one from Mrs. Coleman of Stoke Park was considered by Monty . . . quite unrivalled." But Monty had not seen a pair which came from a Lancashire lady of whom the Prime Minister had never heard. "They have the coronet in the Garter on purple velvet; but so beautiful that I can never wear them, but must put them under a glass case in the Statesman's room, for I have space nowhere else." He apologised for writing all this nonsense—"but I must forget many cares; not the least having to make a Bishop of Durham. It tried me hard."

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[1] Princess Alice, Grand Duchess of Hesse.

He had one matter of gravity to write about—"This bursting of a great gun on board the *Thunderer* is a national calamity. Some scientific men must be sent out to enquire into it; the country will not be satisfied with a merely naval enquiry."

An attack of gout on top of his other ailments seems to have had the effect of banishing them, and by the middle of the month he was so far restored to health that he contemplated moving to London with comparative composure:

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
January 16th, 1879

I hardly know whether you will get this to-morrow, but I hope a messenger may arrive and post it; though it is a barren bulletin except, so far as I am concerned, very good.

I can't say, and that's provoking, whether it was the thaw, or the gout; but I have got rid of my asthma, bronchitis and all the grisly crew, after ten weeks of suffering. So I shall go up to town on Saturday in very good heart, though every possible care and difficulty that politics are heirs to await me. But cares and difficulties when you are well and not "depressed" like the trade of the country, as I have been so long, can be grappled with.

The only amusing incident is that the Duke of Sutherland has accepted my invitation; but whether he will eventually come or not, is a moot question. I have just had a letter that the Duke of Rutland has now made up his mind to support his nephew, and wants Hicks to retire. Probably Hicks will; but the chances are, I should think, that this will create sufficient bad blood and mortification to ensure our defeat.

I hope Lady Florence had a good Ball, which will repay you for your winter campaign.

I go to Downing Street, which is reported to me as very warm and comfortable. Monty is to meet me there on Saturday. He is now at his brother's somewhere in Lincolnshire, looking after his wards.

Your letter was very agreeable as your letters always are, but I should not have known about your skating falls had I not a little examined you.

Yours ever,

B

Every care was taken to guard against the dangers of the journey in a winter of exceptional severity:

10 Downing Street,
January 24th, 1879

It is difficult to write; even the Faery is forgotten. But Cabinets—and long ones—every day and interviews unceasing afterwards, exhaust and at last almost confuse me. I came up with great care; in an express train and in a small saloon carriage, which had been warming for me at Wycombe for a week; and I have never left this house for a minute and yet the enemy has caught me. Dr. Kidd comes to me to-morrow morning and I hope we may arrest it; but I have no great hopes till this savage weather changes.

All the world, I hear, is skating. . . . Karolyi has written to his Countess to defer her arrival till the weather changes. She would be frightened, he says, by this country. He never knew anything like it at St. Petersburg.

Yours ever,

B

His peace of mind was further disturbed by news of a skating accident to Lady Bradford:

10 Downing Street,
January 27th, 1879

I must write a little line to tell you how distressed I am at the news that Bradford sent to me. I have been fearful for some time of your exploits on the ice, which is now like covert shooting and has its regular accidents and catastrophes. Your telegram gives one a little relief; but pray let me know the exact state—though not at present—from yourself. *Don't hurry your recovery.*

Canon Lightfoot of St. Paul's, and a Cambridgeshire hero, is the new Bishop of Durham. The appointment will make a sensation as, generally, that See is filled by translation from the Bench, though not necessarily so as the present instance proves—and others.

I am suffering and a prisoner now of ten days, but still I have held five Cabinets in a week, which no Prime Minister ever did before.

Yours ever,

B

In France President MacMahon was giving further cause for anxiety, for finding himself unable to agree with the Republican Ministry which had been formed under Dufaure in December, he at last decided to resign:

10 Downing Street,
January 29th, 1879

Only one line to hope you are better and to thank you for your letter, which was very kind—but I fear an effort.

Affairs at Paris are very serious, and one expects resignation of Marshal and a sort of revolution every moment.[2] What restless fools! Ninety years of confusion and the loss of two provinces will not tame them!

I have just had a visit from the new Bishop. I was prepared for a very ill-looking man; I was told by the Faery, the most ill-looking man she knew. He is ugly, but his ugliness is not hideous; a good expression in short, which is enough in a man.

I still am a prisoner and begin to sigh for azure skies, and perfumed airs described in a letter from Cannes this morning, from a man who will have to come home to be a Lord Lieutenant in the Highlands!

---

[2] He had actually resigned on the 28th.

My landscape here is Indian Ink and perpetual N.E. wind or blast.

Bradford I suppose has returned, I hope well.

Yours ever,

B

10 Downing Street,
January 31st, 1879

I have little to say, a prisoner writing to a prisoner, and I daresay you will be free first.

Nobody thinks of anything, or rather talks of anything, but France; the quiet revolution which I daresay will be turbulent enough in good time. The Harcourts have sent in their resignation, so you will find quite a new diplomatic corps on your return. Schouvaloff I think remains; but something may happen to Gortchakoff any day and then we shall lose Schouvaloff. I wish somebody would recall that drill sergeant Münster. . . .

Ever yours,

B

10 Downing Street,
February 2nd, 1879

Here I am still a prisoner; a fortnight yesterday I have not left this roof. It is like quarantine. . . . Even Barrington did not come to lunch. It seems to me I shall soon forget the English tongue.

The French Ambassador came yesterday to say good-bye

—though he has promised to stay till his successor is appointed. He does not seem to think the late President's Government will stand, or only for a few weeks. They make it as conditions that the Broglie Administration shall not be impeached and that there shall be no amnesty granted to the Communists, but evidently fear both contingencies occurring.

Gambetta seems to have failed and to have followed events which he could not control.

I hope you are mending. I conclude you will receive this before you reach Bretby.

Yours ever,

B

A Cabinet called for to-morrow.

Early in February the frost broke, much to Beaconsfield's relief:

10 Downing Street,
February 6th, 1879

. . . This change to Favonian breezes is a great relief and delight. I have been here three weeks next Saturday and only went out for the first time this early morn—and not alone. I am very tired—but still it is a first step out of quarantine, and later in the day I go to Hatfield for change of air and scene and shall remain there till Parliament. Before these three weeks I was a month at Hughenden, almost a prisoner. All this makes one a little nervous. I have had plenty to do in London.

I am glad you approve of Y's[3] appointment. It was a compliment to his father who has been a most useful and influential member of the party. Y. himself, I am told, is the stupidest fellow that ever lived—the only man who ever stood two contested elections and never opened his mouth; absolutely.

---

[3] Lord Yarmouth, who was appointed Controller of the Household.

I hope Dufferin's appointment to St. Petersburg will produce results. I wanted a first-rate man there. I conclude the Whigs will be sulky about it; that can't be helped.

The Queen comes up, I think on the 18th, and what with the Court and Parliament and public affairs which, every day, become more anxious, critical and urgent, I shall have enough to do. I trust, however, never to see less of you than in old days, or what seem old days now.

Yours ever,

B

From Hatfield where he spent a few days with Lord and Lady Salisbury, Beaconsfield returned to London somewhat restored, on February 10th. "Came up this morning by a very early train with Monty and Schouvaloff. . . . The weather though wet is soft and suits my infirmities." He was fairly happy over developments abroad so far as they were the outcome of his Foreign policy. "Notwithstanding Harty-Tarty's speech, the Treaty of Berlin is still alive and, unfortunately for him, two most important conventions for the fulfilment of our policy were announced the day after his oration, which was both dull and indiscreet." But while he was congratulating himself on the progress of events in Europe, a blow was struck at the stability and prestige of his Government from an entirely different quarter. In

South Africa the independent action of Sir Bartle Frere precipitated the Zulu War, the first news of which came in the unpalatable shape of the disaster at Isandhlwana:

10 Downing Street,
February 12th, 1879

I could not write to you yesterday—and am equally incapable to-day. I am greatly stricken; and have to support others, which increases the burthen; almost intolerable. I know not which I dread most; the banquet to-day, or the Senate to-morrow.

The Prince of Wales comes to me in half an hour. He is from Osborne; yesterday the Duke of Cambridge was with me. Everybody was congratulating me on being the most fortunate of Ministers, when there comes this terrible disaster!

Yours ever,

B

To Lady Chesterfield

10 Downing Street,
February 13th, 1879

You sent me, dear Darling, a most kind and graceful letter. The terrible disaster has shaken me to the centre and what increases the grief is that I have not only to endure it, but to sustain others and to keep a bold front before an unscrupulous enemy.

I hope you are well.

Adieu!

I have an anxious and busy day.

B

And with this fresh anxiety on his mind, Lord Beaconsfield was once more struck down by illness:

To Lady Bradford

10 Downing Street,
February 16th, 1879

I have been very unfortunate, for coming from the House of Lords on Friday I felt that mysterious dryness in the throat which portends infallibly influenza, and so I have been laid up ever since. After all my sufferings I thought I should have been free of this visitation. And I have got to dine at Marlboro' House to-morrow to meet Crown Princess and on Tuesday Windsor!

There is no news; you have heard perhaps that Mt. Edgecumbe has accepted the Lord Chamberlainship.

I count on seeing you again on Wednesday.

I have not yet been able to see your sister between illness and business—such is life!

What a wretched letter! And yet it is perhaps better than nothing? I doubt.

Yours ever,

B

10 Downing Street,
February 21st, 1879

I am going to resume my writing to you to-day; having, I hope, seen the worst, though a northerly wind and the world white again, and thickly so, is not very encouraging. Had it been, as I hoped, a fair soft day I would have ventured out in a close carriage to break a little my imprisonment—for I have got a dinner to-morrow to the new Austrians, cards of course sent out before my illness, and as I never put off people I must have found a Viceroy, though even Monty did not like to undertake it. I am so free of all fever, though wonderfully weak, that I think I shall be able to do it.

The arrival of Lord Napier had nothing to do with us. He came over on his own hook; his chief reason being to make a speech in House of Lords on Afghanistan. He called on me yesterday, but I was too ill to see him.

To-day I have had a Cabinet at which I sate in a fur coat.

I cannot go to the Council at Windsor to-morrow, but have sent the Lord Chancellor in my stead—to settle all about the Lords Justices who must be appointed when the Queen goes to the Italian Lakes.

We expect news from S. Africa to-morrow.

Some disturbance in Egypt; but France and ourselves send each a ship there which, I hope, will put and keep all right. Now the use of Cyprus would have been shown, for if all had been in trim we might have carried, in *4 and 20 hours,* a body of troops from that isle to Alexandria and in the Queen's ships! So a military occupation of Egypt would be as easy as landing in Ireland. I wish affairs were quieter in France herself. The aspect is not satisfactory.

This is a long letter from one very weak and easily tired, but

Ever yours,

B

Lady Bradford was expected in London before the end of the month, and for the next few weeks Lord Beaconsfield had little need to write. His letters up to April were few and very brief:

10 Downing Street,
February 25th, 1879

Have you arrived? And how are you? I have nearly thrown off my gout and hobble very well with a stick.

Dearest Jane lunched here.

They won't let me out to-day, but I am sanguine, unless the weather is bad, to reach you to-morrow. You need not be squeamish about paying me visits. I have received some from ladies and refused more, but I should always be at home to you.

Yours ever,

B

10 Downing Street,
March 1st, 1879

I called in Lowndes Square yesterday to congratulate Newport on having two strings to his bow,[4] which must please you all very much.

I have a Cabinet this morning and then go to Windsor, where I shall stay till Monday. I should be happy to have a line from you there, which I shall not leave on Monday very early.

Yours ever,

B

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[4] The occasion was the birth of the Hon. Richard Bridgeman, Lord Beaconsfield's godson.

10 Downing Street,
March 8th, 1879

Do you think one of your daughters would be offended if I asked her to do me the honor of dining here to-day; but Lady Londonderry is very unwell and can't come.

I am quite pleased with your bulletin of yourself.

Yours ever,

B

At the end of March Lady Bradford left London, and the correspondence was renewed:

10 Downing Street,
April 1st, 1879

Most distressed about your finger. After I wrote to you on Sunday, I called on "Constance" S.[5] who was full, as usual, of affectionate remarks and reminiscences of the Derbys. I don't like the African news and shall be nervous till the fate of Pearson is decided. However, the military authorities are in good heart.

The division last night was good. I should have been contented with 45 which describes, I think, our essential strength. It is clear that "Joint occupation" will be the next party struggle.[6] Perhaps the occupation may not take place, and if it do, I think we are always sure of a great majority on anything connected with our Levantine policy.

Prince Hal in the absence of the Queen, wishes to be in frequent communication with the Prime Minister. This is all very well if it do not take, as threatened, the form of a rather protracted Sandringham visit. One ought not to leave town for a month yet.

---

[5] Lady Constance Stanley, sister-in-law of the 15th Earl of Derby, and afterwards Countess of Derby, on the succession of her husband in 1893.

[6] Joint occupation of Egypt by England and France.

Yours ever,

B

"Your dear letter gave me great pleasure to-day," he wrote on the 2nd, "mixed with a little pain at your using your hand. . . . I was not, and am not, well; I want sun. . . . Budget to-morrow. The Opposition are gloating over the taxes!" And on the 3rd:

A hurried line. The sad casualty to the 10th Hussars depresses everyone. They had just greatly distinguished themselves in the most considerable engagement that has occurred in the campaign. The enemy was 5,000 strong and signally defeated—much through the charging of the 10th. The Prince's own Regiment. He is much excited.

The Budget is now on. There are to be no new taxes! So one source of difficulty and danger is over.

My dinner turned out very well yesterday; a success; produced, probably, by the variety of elements and some new ones. Henry Lennox whispered to Monty "Who is that old buffer you have been talking to?"

"The French Ambassador."

Henry fell like a shot and in five minutes was cringing round his Excellency and chattering French like an ape.

Yours ever,

B

IDA, WIFE OF THE FOURTH EARL OF BRADFORD WITH PARROT GIVEN BY DISRAELI TO SELINA

House of Lords,
April 4th, 1879

I hope you like our popular Budget!!! Gladstone, Childers and Goschen are furious and frantic. Rylands goes about roaring "There never was such a sell."

Prince of Wales has just left his seat and sits by me quizzing Lord Shaftesbury. He says he is Baroness B. Coutts without petticoats. Prince wants me to call on him to-morrow on "public affairs!" before he leaves town. What is bad is, I fear I am in for a Sandringham visit.

Your

B

10 Downing Street,
April 5th, 1879

I sent you a very stupid letter yesterday and I send you a stupider one to-day. Indeed it was not a letter yesterday; only a hurried mem. scribbled on my hat in the House of Lords.

I fear there is small likelihood of my reaching Weston this recess. Sandringham again interferes with it. I can't throw over Prince Hal again. Do you remember last year and how we were betrayed by the little silly Duchess? At present, though I fear constant Cabinets, my plans are to reach Castle Bromwich on Wednesday, Christening[7] on Thursday and get home again at end of week. On the 14th I must go to Sandringham. Could not you pay a visit to Castle Bromwich too? And are you not a God-mamma? You ought to be. . . .

---

[7] Of his godson, the Hon. R. Bridgeman.

10 Downing Street,
April 7th, 1879

Can hardly save post, but, D.V. I shall lunch at Castle Bromwich on Wednesday, so I shall virtually have two days of your society. I have just left the Prince of Wales; much excited about Greece, but I think I shall settle it.

Did I tell you I had from Baveno a letter 14 pages very closely written;[8] the history of everything that has happened since our separation? This morning, a telegram in cypher, disapproving of my going to Sandringham as I shall "catch cold!" A little jeal. on that subject.

The news from S. Africa is still nothing.

There are troubles enough, but the Budget makes everybody glad.

A Cabinet to-morrow.

Yours ever,

B

Beaconsfield managed his visit to Castle Bromwich for the christening of his godson, and on his return to London wrote—"No Sandringham, as affairs are very pressing. . . . Nothing can be more difficult than the Egyptian affairs. The fact is the existence of the *Credit Foncier* is at stake, and if it fall the French Ministry must go with it." The Prince of Wales was not, however, to be put off so easily:

10 Downing Street,
April 14th, 1879

Most happy to hear from you, but wish you could have given me a better account of Bradford. Monty arrived this morning, but could tell me nothing, as he only came from his stupid brother's.

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[8] From the Queen.

I had a very long letter from Prince Hal this morning and a very amusing one. He still hopes I may go to Sandringham, which, considering it is still snowing and sleeting here with a due East wind, is not likely. The party, which he gives me in detail, is not particularly inviting—Duke of Cambridge, Sir Henry Keppell, Admiral Glyn, Morier, and Bernal Osborne! Worse than the snow and the East wind . . .

Two baskets of primroses, made up into little bouquets, have just arrived from Osborne. The head gardener there has orders, he says, to send them every week.

Prince Hal is sanguine—nay sure—that Bartle Frere and Chelmsford will come out triumphant. I wish I shared his convictions.

Tell me how the dear finger is.

Yours,

B

10 Downing Street,
April 16th, 1879

. . . Letter from the Faery; rather indignant that people should say she had had bad weather. Delightful weather! If it rained in the morning it did not in afternoon, and *vice versa*. Returns by same route and manner as she departed. Sleeps at Paris 24th, Cherbourg 25th and home next day. Hopes to see me D. V. in a fortnight. Delighted I am not going to Sandringham. On the other hand, Prince Hal presses me to go there. Hope Bradford better.

Ever,

B

News from South Africa was meagre and the cause of much anxiety—"There is great gloom and depression about South Africa. I wish I could believe that the next accounts would be brighter." On April 18th he went to Hatfield until the following Monday, when the House of Lords was due to meet.

10 Downing Street,
April 21st, 1879

I found the post would not allow my writing to you from Hatfield, or rather the Sabbath-stricken trains which are as immovable as in Scotland.

I went down there with the hope that I might combine business and frequent telegrams with the burst of Spring—but that has been a failure. The Sun appeared on Saturday, but with a cutting Easterly wind which I am sorry to hear that you sat out in. And on Sunday it poured and now I am in London again, black and terribly cold.

There was literally nobody at Hatfield save the family—but that is a numerous and amusing one. Five boys, the youngest quite an urchin,[9] hardly breeched, but giving his opinion on public affairs like his brothers. The *Standard* is his favorite newspaper, but he did not approve of its leading article on Russia of that day, "the tone too sarcastic"!!!

General news not unfavorable; all depends on to-morrow, when we shall hear from South Africa; I tremble.

Yours ever,

B

---

[9] Lord Hugh Cecil.

The news from South Africa, when it came, was only partly reassuring:

10 Downing Street,
April 24th, 1879

Pearson's relief was a relief to us and to all—but nothing else seems very good. It is quite clear that Evelyn Wood has had another "Disaster," though partly veiled by the subsequent repulse of the Zulus; but we lost many men and quite a massacre of officers. He was surprised riding at the head of his staff!

I have had a long Cabinet—3 hours—and am so wearied that I have neither strength nor spirit to write.

You were quite right about Hardwicke having put his affairs a little in order; but how he did it I will tell you another time.

Adieu!
Your
B

But despite adverse news, the Prime Minister was confident of the support of Parliament:

. . . I think we shall have a good division on Monday; 60 majority; which is more than our party number. Rylands did us much good. His Hudibrastic vein was quite disgraceful. The world wonders how the Opposition could trust their case to such a coarse hand. The truth is he was self-appointed, and the vulgar ruffian, like the hero of a mob, had his way. Gladstone was to have spoken, but was so disgusted that he took refuge in what he does not like—silence. However, we shall hear him on Monday.

The news from Afghanistan is favorable. I think a happy and immediate end is probable in this affair. That will do us good in other quarters. . . .

10 Downing Street,
April 29th, 1879

There is a great debate in Lords to-night, that booby, Granby, coming up to support Lord Bateman in a Motion to restore protection! So I shall not be able to call on you as I had hoped.

Yesterday I went down to Windsor and had an audience of an hour and twenty minutes. Twenty minutes over luncheon time! Considered a miracle by the Court. The Queen very well and very agreeable. Her Majesty will stay a month in town. She was so gracious as to bring me a *Souvenir* from Italy, which you will see when you next come and have a cup of tea here, or something better. I took Monty down with me who lunched with the Equerries and seems to have enjoyed himself.

The division last night was very good and Northcote's speech, apparently, a decided success; but I have seen no one yet to report to me. If the Spring would only come we might have some hopes for the country; but May Day is at hand and at night it still freezes!

Yours ever,

B

No amount of success in Parliament, however, could alter the fact that things were not going well in South Africa:

To Lady Chesterfield

10 Downing Street,
May 8th, 1879

There was a great drawing-room on Tuesday—200 presentations—and there is one to-day which, however, I have asked not to attend. I was astonished and shocked to see Bradford at his post in his gold coat on Tuesday—but I hear he is not the worse for it. It was bitterly cold and I wore my Shetland armor.

I had my audience yesterday of the Queen—a long one. Her Majesty very well and seemed rather to enjoy her visit to London, where I wish she would remain. She departs on the 21st for her misty Highland home.

The news from the Cape very unsatisfactory, Chelmsford wanting more forces, though he does nothing with the 15,000 men he has. He seems cowed and confused. We have a telegram that Yacoob Khan is in the English camp. I wish Lord Lytton and General Roberts were at the Cape of Good Hope.

They say of Millais' portrait of Gladstone, which has a very sad, subdued expression, that it is a portrait of Mr. Gladstone on leaving Downing Street.

Adieu, dear friend.

B

He wrote again to Lady Chesterfield on the 11th:

10 Downing Street,
May 11th, 1879

A real, rainy Sunday which even the roses of Bretby, now entering my room, can scarcely brighten.

The Afghan news is very good and I credit it; but, strange to say, the Government has not yet received any telegram confirming it. But we cannot compete with the *Standard* newspaper which does not hesitate to expend £500 on a telegram! The owner of the paper died a few weeks since and left half a million and £5,000 a year for life to the Editor of the Journal!

There is no striking news to-day. Affairs are, on the whole, a little improving. Afghanistan and Roumelia will, I hope, be blotted out of the catalogue of public cares by the end of the month; trade is more brisk; and if the sun would shine, we might in time get our rents again.

Adieu! dear friend.

B

On the 17th he wrote to Lady Bradford to tell her that he was going down to Windsor to stay till Monday—"a telegram just arrived to ask Monty also, but where he is, I know not." The result of his visit was a series of Cabinet meetings on his return—"Here are three consecutive Cabinets," he wrote on the 23rd. "What will the Opposition think or say?" He invited Lady Bradford and her daughters to come to Downing Street for the trooping of the Colours: "No Guards will go to the Cape, so you may be easy." A few days later he enlarged upon these matters in a letter to Lady Chesterfield:

10 Downing Street,
May 28th, 1879

We have had a terrible time of it, six Cabinets in eight days. I believe it never happened before. However, Sir

Garnet Wolseley goes to S. Africa and goes to-morrow night though between ourselves the Horse Guards are furious, the Princes all raging and every mediocrity as jealous as if we had prevented him from conquering the world.

As for domestic affairs, the Empress[10] has departed having presented me with her framed portrait. I met her at dinner last Wednesday at the Salisburys' and on the next day at Marlboro' House. And then she went. There are a good many royalties still lingering about looking as if they wanted a dinner.

On the Birthday, Selina and Ida and the little ones came here to see the trooping of the colors, a pretty sight with a fine day, which we fortunately had. Selina looks better. They go to Weston on Friday. I am very tired and hope on Saturday to reach Hughenden—Bradford has won a race and seems quite well.

Yours ever,

B

After his long spell of work in London Beaconsfield looked forward to spending Whitsuntide at Hughenden:

To Lady Chesterfield

10 Downing Street,
May 31st, 1879

I send you a little line before I depart from this place where I have been six months—and terribly eventful ones. You have sent me so much and so many good things that if I attempted properly to thank you, it would read like a catalogue: from roses and lilies to Bretby butter, and viands from the "dappled forester."

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[10] The Empress of Germany

The Horse Guards rage furiously, but Sir Garnet has departed. They all complain of the "hurried manner" in which the affair was managed. I dare say. If there had not been a little hurry he never would have gone. They would have got up some conspiracy which would have arrested everything.

All the world now is thinking and talking of a new French actress, Sarah Bernhardt: places, boxes and stalls taken for more than two months. Lord Dudley gives a great banquet in the midst of Whitsun week, and she is to play in the evening. He invited me and I declined, as I could not forgo country air. I met him at dinner at the Cadogans' on Thursday, and he was stiff and said "Not yet departed, I see." I replied "No, I go for my holidays and they have not yet commenced." "Holidays are a convenient word." Huffish.

The Bradfords were there—Selina looking better. . . .

Yours ever,

B

CHAPTER XIV

June–August 1879

SOCIAL BURDENS: THE END OF THE SESSION

Lord Beaconsfield's brief holiday was marred by the news which he received, soon after his arrival at Hughenden, of the death of Lord Rothschild. "I cannot write any more," he explained to Lady Chesterfield on June 3rd; "I have just received a telegram announcing the death of Baron Rothschild, one of my greatest friends and one of the ablest men I ever knew. I am greatly shocked. Very sudden and short illness—I presume a fit." But he derived, as always, great pleasure from the beauty of the country in early summer:

To Lady Bradford

June 5th, 1879

. . . The country is lovely now that great gilder and varnisher the sun has touched up the picture. Bloom and blossom still behind hand; but this delay compensated for by the extraordinary luxuriance of the foliage. I never knew my beeches so heavy with leaf. It is not so at Balmoral from which John Manners writes me dreary letters—Snowy hills and cold and cutting winds in the valley. But her Majesty in high spirits.

He was not left long in peace, however, to enjoy his sylvan ease:

10 Downing Street,
June 6th, 1879

To-morrow there is a Cabinet at eleven and a meeting of the party immediately afterwards. Affairs have got into such a mess in the House of Commons that I am obliged to call the party together. It is the first time since I left the House of Commons. And only the second time since the existence of the present Ministry, which shows how loyal and true the party has run.

For the next few days his letters are full of complaints of the social burden weighing on the shoulders of the Prime Minister:

Hughenden Manor,
June 8th, 1879

. . . Master Leopold has entreated me to give him a dinner and it must not be later than the 20th as the Queen returns on 21st and he would probably not be permitted to dine out. I hope you and Bradford will come and meet him, as I have acceded to his wish.

The Prince of Wales wrote to request that I, or Lord Salisbury, could give Prince of Battenberg a dinner on the 10th the day he returns from Balmoral and the day before he leaves England! This was too sharp practice and I declined. . . .

Let me know when I shall find you in town.

Yours ever,

B

Hughenden Manor,
June 9th, 1879

I hope you will win at the Races!

Salisbury has got up a male dinner for the Bulgarian Prince and, what is terrible, I am obliged to go to it. I should have departed from this to-morrow morning at all events, as there is a Cabinet on Wednesday and the Golden Wedding[1] Banquet in Levee dress and highly decorated!

I hope to hear from you that you are coming to Master Leopold's banquet on the 20th as he says all ladies asked to meet him must be good-looking.

Yours ever,

B

---

10 Downing Street,
June 11th, 1879

I was very obliged to you for your letters which were very agreeable to me. And am truly pleased you can come to me on the 20th.

Yesterday I dined at Lord Salisbury's, a male banquet, of which you know my opinion. I had to represent Lady Salisbury and sate in the middle of the table with Münster on my right and Schouvaloff on my left; opposite to me Salisbury with the Prince of Bulgaria on his right and Musurus on his left.

We were all diplomatists (foreign) or Cabinet Ministers, with the addition of Dufferin. It was the only way a company of becoming guests could be commanded at a moment's notice, and I thought it rather cleverly managed. Schouvaloff was most champagnish. The Prince is good-looking; above the middle height and well proportioned; only 22—but no fool; I judge from his private interview with me this morning, which was long and interesting.

---

[1] Of the German Emperor.

We have had a long Cabinet to-day and he followed, and then I had to telegraph at some length to Balmoral, so I am somewhat tired. It has rained all day, though aneroid rising.

I shall not get a breath of air or a step of exercise and have to be dressed by 8 o'clock in Levee dress and decorations, to celebrate the Golden Wedding—which will itself after all be a great failure, as neither Emperor of Russia nor Emperor of Austria (I believe) is to be there.

I suppose, weather permitting, Monty will have the pleasure, perhaps, of seeing you to-morrow on your magical Ascot Lawn. He has been sighing very much to-day, which means he wants to be somewhere else. . . .

Yours ever,

B

To Lady Chesterfield

10 Downing Street,
June 13th, 1879

Whether it be better for me to be in town or country is useless to discuss, as in town I must be, and I have no prospect of leaving it for a long time as the pressure of important affairs increases every day.

My correspondence is necessarily and terribly neglected, and I have just had a complaint from head quarters that I rarely communicate. So dear Darling, you must not complain . . .

The banquet of the Golden Wedding had it been in a becoming locale would have been a fine thing. Forty guests in splendid uniforms and glittering with decorations, with a great company of Princes and all present celebrated, ought to have produced an effect, and must have done so, were they not all crammed into a London dining room.

There was no room for effect: it was like looking too close at a picture. No margin for the service. There was a reception of many hundreds afterwards in uniform, &c., but I managed to get home before eleven, though I fear I displeased my host thereby. . . .

Yours ever,

B

The description of the reception which he gave to Lady Bradford was less restrained:

A most extraordinary crowd in the evening, of very unknown persons all in uniform, etc., except Teck who abused everything and everybody. I find he wanted to be Prince of Bulgaria and I think would have made a very good one, for he has now English experience and has no lack of ability. She would have done admirably, though I should be loth to lose her.

Lord Bradford won the Hardwicke stakes at Ascot—"I was glad to see Bradford had won a good stake, which will at any rate lighten his trainer's bill." And he wound up his letter with a note of two interviews which he had granted:

Cardinal Manning paid me a long visit yesterday, followed by M. Lesseps who wants to cut through the Isthmus of Panama; it can be done in eight years and would cost only forty million sterling.

At an entertainment given by Lord and Lady Wilton, with Mme. Sarah Bernhardt as the centre of attraction, news was received of the death in Zululand of the Prince Imperial:

To Lady Chesterfield

10 Downing Street,
June 22nd, 1879

This affair of Prince Louis Napoleon occasions great perplexities. Her Majesty's Government disapproved of his going to Africa, and when he persisted in his purpose would not permit him to be enrolled in Her Majesty's forces. He went, therefore, as a mere traveller, but I fear—though I do not as yet absolutely know it—that some indiscreet friends in very high places gave him privately letters to Lord Chelmsford, and begging that General to place the Prince on his staff.

The Queen, who returned to Windsor only yesterday, is much affected by this sad event; but if we do not take care, in endeavoring to pay respect to his memory and express sympathy with his unhappy mother, we may irritate and offend the French people and Government. After all, he was nothing more nor less than a pretender to the throne of France supported by a well-organised and very active clique, but representing numerically only a small minority of the people. The Queen who is much agitated and distressed about the affair, which she learnt as she was leaving Balmoral, telegraphed to me frequently during her route, and I am now going down to Windsor to see her Majesty and expect a distressing scene; for I cannot sanction or recommend much that Her Majesty, in the fullness of her heart and grief, would suggest to express Her sympathy and that of Her people at this moment.

The Wiltons gave one of the most successful and prettiest entertainments I easily remember on Thursday last: a dinner to the Prince of Wales which I attended, and afterwards, the principal saloon turned into a charming theatre received the world to witness the heroine of the hour, Sarah Bernhardt. Nothing was ever better done, not marred even by the mournful, but exciting news of the death of Prince Louis, which arrived in a telegram to H.R. Highness.

On Friday Prince Leopold dined with me at his own suggestion. It was the last day of his holidays, for he will have to go back to his palatial prison at Windsor, at once. Selina dined with me and some other pretty or agreeable, and pretty and agreeable ladies. Lady Lonsdale, who is now looked upon as our chief beauty, and Lady Clarendon much admired, and Lady Archie Campbell, who is a spiritualist and looks one, and some others. The dinner was remarkable for one thing—the return to Society after six years of ill-health and solitude, of Duchess of Abercorn.

I ought to have told you that the Duchess Louise was on my right hand the soul of everything, though she had a patch on her eye!

Dear Darling, I must thank you for a great many things—sweet and delicious. The hamper, as you directed, was waited for at the station and everything was quite fresh.

Adieu, with every kind thought,

B

Before the end of June an attack of illness incapacitated him once more, though it did not prevent him from writing in a cheerful strain to Lady Chesterfield:

10 Downing Street,
June 28th, 1879

I was very glad to have your letter this morning and your charming flowers and fruit heralded it last night.

The gout attacked me on Wednesday—very sharp, but not unkindly, and I have been a close prisoner to my bed, or sofa, since; but the remedies, though safe and simple, have been effective, and I quite expect to be out and in my place in the House of Lords on Monday. Selina—who is going to-day to the Rosslyns in Essex, has just paid me a visit and she paid me also a visit the day before yesterday with Ida.

Public affairs look well. The Egyptian business has been admirably managed. And the very day that Harty-Tarty was about to commence a campaign against us on the subject, the news arrived that we had completely gained our purpose. A telegram has just arrived dated Cape Town, the 10th June, from Sir Bartle Frere saying that the Prince Imperial's body was expected there on the 15th per *Boadicea.* "No forward move in Zululand, but suggestions for peace conference continue. The sincerity of the Zulu King doubtful."

Sir Bartle Frere who ought to be impeached, writes always as if he were quite unconscious of having done anything wrong!

I was with the Queen on Monday last—a very long audience—nearly an hour and a half, and H. M. talked only on one subject which seems greatly to have affected her. The body is to be received by the Duke of Cambridge who will place, on behalf of the Queen, the Grand Cross of the Bath on the coffin.

I was to have gone to Windsor again on Thursday as the Queen "had so much to say to me, and had said nothing." I could not of course go, or even move. I am very free from pain to-day, but wonderfully weak and can scarcely write these feeble lines.

Adieu! with every kind thought.

B

His expectations of a speedy recovery were realised and he was back in his place in the House of Lords at the beginning of the week:

To Lady Bradford

10 Downing Street,
July 1st, 1879

I kept my carriage at the House yesterday but it was impossible to get away from a critical debate. I shall call at six, though after the message you sent me by Monty, I hardly can count on finding you at home. I have had a roughish time since I saw you last and have as many cares and troubles as a man can well endure.

In due course the body of the Prince Imperial reached England and was buried with pomp at Chislehurst—proceedings which the Prime Minister viewed with cold disfavour, as he did not fail to admit to Lady Chesterfield:

I have just got a telegram from the Queen who has returned to Windsor and who seems highly pleased at all that occurred at Chislehurst this morning. I hope the French Government will be as joyful. In my mind, nothing could be more injudicious than the whole affair.

The effect of the party meeting which Beaconsfield had held early in June was satisfactory, as was shown by the division on the Army Discipline Bill in July. "I hope the majority satisfied you!" he exclaimed in his letter to Lady Bradford on the 18th. "I think Harty-Tarty has blundered. A division in an expiring Parliament reflects to a certain degree the opinion of ye country; and I look upon these numbers as a protest against obstructiveness and faction as much as a vote in favor of military discipline." The protagonists in the political combat met during the week-end at Hatfield where was also the Prince of Wales. "Louise has said nothing to me about politics," he told Lady Bradford, "but I fancy she hears a good deal indirectly about Hartington's adventure. He is here, and the Prince who takes up all these questions as personal, is very short with him and says things for which Harty-Tarty seems not to care one straw. I am told last night in the smoking room this was very apparent."

Success over the Army Discipline Bill was followed by a further victory in connection with the Irish University measure. "The manœuvre of the Irish University Bill is so successful that all faction has ceased in House of Commons and, so far as I can judge, the whole will be wound up by the 12th, latest 15th." He added a little regretfully—"A new Prince has arrived, an Archduke of Austria, which threatens a lingering banquet or two." Beaconsfield was, indeed, anxious to escape from London:

10 Downing Street,
August 2nd, 1879

August second! Terrible to be in town and not even know when you may see any other trees than those in St. James' Park. As long as we can get August in the country, it is summer. I would have run off now, were it not for a terrible dinner with the Lord Mayor on the 6th and the uncertainty of an inevitable visit to Osborne.

I called at 15 Hill Street yesterday and found our friend at home. She seems to have had an amusing dinner at Holland House; met our new Prince whom nobody has seen, and the Imperial Frederica whom, by the by, I am to meet to-day at the Ailesburys, where you made me go . . .

His experience, at the dinner, to which he went unwillingly enough, called forth some caustic comments:

10 Downing Street,
August 4th, 1879

. . . The Ailesburys live in their old house in St. George's Place; hardly fit for an elder son; would not do for Newport. "What is the use of a large house when there are only us two?" she said. Yes, but great nobles have great houses to receive the world in, and not such hugger-mugger as I had to endure on Saturday—a room in which 16 were crowded and no space for servants, who spilt claret on the tablecloth and sauced your coat. Then a display of plate which required a banqueting hall. Instead of making the scene splendid, it was like dining in a back shop at Hancocks or S. & Mortimer. I sate next to Frederica who is highly romantic, and took down Lady Alberta Edgcumbe to the relief of Abercorn who was afraid he would have to take down his granddaughter.

Yours,

B

There was still much to be done before the Prime Minister could consider himself free to depart. There was the banquet in the city and a visit to the Queen at Osborne before Parliament could be prorogued. And besides accounts of these, his letters during the remaining days of the Session contained such social and political news as he thought might interest his correspondent:

10 Downing Street,
August 6th, 1879

Horrid weather and dispiriting for a City feast where I eat nothing and where, after three or four hours of gas, inane conversation, and every other species of exhaustion, I have to get up with a confused brain and exhausted body, to make a speech every word of which will be criticised for months.

As to S. Africa, I shall be disappointed if the next news does not tell us the war is virtually finished. I have confidence in Wolseley, but I believe Chelmsford committed at the last as many mistakes as are consistent with what is called success. We are triumphing in the Commons with our Irish University Bill, which is sure now to pass and will affect events at the General Election.

I could not go to the Roman Catholic Wedding [2] yesterday, as I had a Cabinet at half past 11; but I went in the afternoon with Monty, down to Chiswick, now hired and tenanted by the Butes, and where the Marchioness received in honor of the wedding; but the rain spoiled everything.

I had dined with the Howards the day before and met a large Roman Catholic party, who were almost all Howards by name or blood.

The Duke of Devonshire was, they say, on the point of putting Chiswick down had not such good tenants turned up. He literally "hates" the place, I am assured; it is so dark, damp, and expensive; the last in his Grace's opinion its greatest fault. If it were not for Hartington, who rather likes it, Chiswick would be doomed. But the Duke is most penurious, they say; will give no general entertainments and scarcely a dinner, unless it consist of only a few persons, and those relations.

Some Canadian Prime Ministers, etc., have arrived in town; they ought to be fêted. I really can do no more, but have been obliged to agree to meet them at dinner at Sir Beach's on 9th.

Yours ever,

B

10 Downing Street,
August 8th, 1879

Monty is still with me and goes with me to-morrow to

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[2] Of Lord Edmund Talbot, afterwards Viscount Fitzalan, K.G., and Lady M. Bertie.

Osborne, where we stay until Monday. It is impossible that a summons could be more inconvenient as I ought to be writing Her Majesty's Speech, but there are some quandaries at this moment and the command is peremptory.

I conclude from what she said, that Lady Chesterfield is at Stratfield Saye and that she will return, probably, to-morrow.

Lord Chelmsford seems to have made a great mistake in retreating from Ulundi, but I feel sure that Wolseley will put it all right. The news of yesterday is not unsatisfactory.

The city was successful.

There is no news, or rather you, with your organised correspondence, always know everything even if you be in the country, long before me. There is a great death to-day—Fife, leaving me a Thistle and a Lord Lieutenancy, and if Reidhaven will stand (which he ought, as I ribboned his father) we may, perhaps, gain a seat.

Adieu!

Yours ever,

B

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10 Downing Street,
August 12th, 1879

Visit to Osborne rather lighter than usual. H.M. most gracious and agreeable and made up for the stupidity and mysterious whisperings of the courtiers. I had two long audiences, each much more than an hour, and engrossed all her conversation in the evening. I calculated I had more than three hours of her gracious conversation, and had she not been very affable I must myself have dried up.

I was invited to lunch with the Edinburghs to see the children, which I wished to do; but was summoned by the Queen and could not. Later on Sunday, I went to Cowes, paid the Wiltons a visit in the "Palatine" and then to "Egypt" to see Prince Hal, who had sent for me on some business, but whom I found playing lawn tennis with many beauties, Princess included; "Egypt" now the temporary residence of the Adrian Hopes.

I saw the Connaughts who paid a morning visit to Osborne.

By rising at half past 6, I got to London yesterday in good business time, having much to do. After the House of Lords, I saw your sister who leaves town to-day. The Council for the speech will be held on Thursday at Osborne, and I hope Parliament will be prorogued the following day, though not quite sure. They kept poor Sir Stafford up till nearly 8 o'clock this morning.

Yours ever,

B

10 Downing Street,
August 14th, 1879

The Lord Chancellor and Duke of Richmond and others have gone down to Osborne to-day with Queen's Speech, and to-morrow Parliament will be prorogued. An arduous, but on the whole glorious, Session, for besides our external triumphs, the world will be surprised at the weighty domestic measures which we have carried; notably the Army Discipline Act which for length and difficulty was equal to three great measures, and the Irish University Act, solving a difficulty which had upset two previous Ministries.

I never had a harder task than to write the Queen's Speech, for the domestic measures were not passed when I attempted to record their being carried—and it was a hard task to carry them. It required a physical effort of no mean character, and if on Monday the House had not sate firmly till 7.10 into Tuesday morn, the faction would have beaten us. But that night of terrible determination and endurance cowed them. Mine was not a very gracious effort when I did not, and could not, spare them; but it was not a moment for false delicacy and I was as ruthless as Lord Strathnairn in India.

We have a Cabinet to-morrow at 11 o'clock; prorogation at two; and then I go down to Hughenden. Monty with me till Monday, and then he goes to Scotland.

I have pressing business at home and more than I can manage, but Monty meets my Steward on Saturday and will put things in train. It seems sad not to meet you at Bretby but it could not be; besides our meetings there have never been very successful; you have always been snatched away, and if not, it is a roof where, I observe, we never are alone. Three, they say, make bad company; they make me, I always feel and know, stupid and rather sullen.

I have made your friend the Duke of Richmond and Gordon Lord Lieutenant of Banffshire. Though he has 4 duchies and Garter, he was not a Lord Lieutenant!

Yours ever,

B

Lord Beaconsfield had been adding to his property at Hughenden, and on his arrival rode over the new estate.

"The old tenants think me quite mad in buying land in this county and evidently intend to decamp." He was still anxious about events in South Africa:

August 19th, 1879

. . . One waits with some anxiety for news from S. Africa. All the anti-Wolseleyites are full of rage and some feeling of coming triumph that he will make a fiasco. I have confidence in my man or should not have sent him there; but according to high authority he is an egoist and a braggart and has behaved infamously to Chelmsford and everybody else. Nelson was an egoist and a braggart, but did pretty well. And I dare say I should have been an egoist and braggart if I had not had the advantage of being abused for forty years.

To his disgust the weather showed no improvement and the prospects of the harvest could scarcely have been worse:

August 20th, 1879

. . . This place is desolate and except on Saturday which I have described to you, I have never been able to get out. It has rained night and day. The peacocks have no tails and are yet still moulting. They persist in showing themselves like Falstaff's ragged regiment. They have eaten all the flowers, and have no beauty to substitute for that which they have destroyed. The stars in their courses have fought against

Your

B

From the Continent came a rumor of the resignation of Count Andrassy:

Hughenden Manor,
August 22nd, 1879

I had this morning a long letter from the Duke of Cambridge, who had just had a still longer, and farewell, talk with Bismarck at Kissingen. The Prince does not seem to know much more about his confidential ally, Andrassy, than we do. If it take place, Bismarck would like Karolyi to have the post. I suppose because he knows the length of his foot. My own opinion is that such is the dearth of men in Austria, that if Andrassy really retires, old Beust has a chance of coming to the front again! That will be strange. Bismarck is afraid that Ignatieff is making way again in case Gortchakoff disappears, and seems to think that his other friend Schouvaloff has no chance whatever. Lobanoff a better one.

But Dufferin writes that he attended the grand review by special invitation, and that in the course of the morning held the most friendly and amiable conversation with him. The Emperor wonderfully pleased by what I said of him at the Mansion House, and all the generals did nothing but praise Lord Beaconsfield and England! Quite a new thing. From which I infer that their expedition to Merve has failed, and that the heat and the want of water and the desert have floored them. Dufferin was particularly to impress upon Lord Beaconsfield that the Emperor had no intention, and never had one, of going to Merve. Probably not now.

I have not read a word that Gladstone has written, or spoken, for nearly a year but I like your criticism and hope your judgment is correct, though I think the agricultural bankruptcy must finish us.

Yours ever,

B

In a letter to Lady Chesterfield of the same date he gave details of the great review of troops in Russia.

Hughenden Manor,
August 22nd, 1879

There may be some news from S. Africa to-day but it has not reached me yet; but unless it be something very rare or pressing, I have ordered no special messengers to be sent to me—my daily post bag is enough. I had an amusing letter from Dufferin to-day. He had been to the great review near St. Petersburg: 40,000 men under arms of which 6,000 were cavalry, and sixty guns. All on a beautiful plain without an undulation and not a single spectator, except the grandees invited, allowed to be present, so that the effect should not be marred. There was a battle, and Dufferin asked General Chanzy whether it was at all like the real thing. General Chanzy said "exact resemblance." The charge of 6,000 helmeted horsemen at full pace was the finest thing, Dufferin says, he ever saw.

The wind to-day keeps off the rain, but I have given up the harvest.

Yours ever,

B

The Queen, to Beaconsfield's annoyance, considered it desirable that the Prime Minister should give a personal interview to Lord William Beresford upon whom she had conferred the V.C. for an act of gallantry in South Africa:

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
August 25th, 1879

Mr. Jem Daly came down by 5 o'clock train yesterday on business, and slept here and will post this to-day, so it will reach you (I conclude Weston) to-morrow.

The Faery departs to-day; a renewed fever, I regret to say, about Carey who, she deplores, has been let off. Lord W. Beresford has been down there and invested by herself with V.C. and, no doubt, he has set the furze on fire, being a hero and having really done the very thing which, they say, Carey ought to have done; but he only saved a trooper not a Prince.

Unhappily, the Faery insists that it is most important I should see W.B., and three telegrams, two yesterday, have arrived about it. It terribly knocks me up at this moment to receive these guests, which interfere with the Silence Cure. It is dreadful too, to have to dine with a single person and eat when you have no wish, merely that his feelings should not be offended.

However, Jem Daly knows W.B. and is to see him immediately he arrives in town this morning and do what he can. I hope W.B. has gone to Scotland, but fear the telegrams from Osborne may have also reached him.

Jem Daly says he has seen Wellesley more than once,

HUGHENDEN

who is as gay as a lark. He has resigned the Secretaryship of Embassy, but not Queen's Aide-de-Campship. J.D. thinks Lady Ely may have kept the whole thing secret from some one, but that is impossible. Some one always knows everything. Jem Daly says he dined at White's a few nights ago and that Wellesley and De la Cour were both dining there, though not at the same table.[3] There were about 20 persons present, a goodly number at this time of the year.

Adieu!
Your
B

The peacocks look better; crouching in the sun which lights up their purple necks, while the loss of the rest of their splendor is not so obvious. One of the ladies presented me on Saturday with a family of four; an almost unprecedented event, as they seldom exceed 1 or 2 and then are hatched always in wild places and mysterious woods.

Hughenden Manor,
August 28th, 1879

Hardly a moment to write a line. Sir Beach has been here all the morning on business, but could not stay—"dine and sleep" as they say at Court—as his lady in London is in a delicate situation; hourly delicacy.

No news from the Cape; but no apprehensions; all will go right. Sir Garnet has now 15,000 men after all he sent away. I believe he thinks now he has 5,000 too many; his predecessors were panic struck and blundered to the last.

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[3] The reference is to Colonel the Hon. F. A. Wellesley's exploit in Vienna in carrying off—and eventually marrying—the lady who performed under the stage name of Kate Vaughan, and whose affections had been understood to have been in the keeping of John De la Cour here mentioned.

The Faery was beat by Paddy[4] with all her energy. He went to Ireland last night having of course, his engagements, and doubtless agreeable ones; a hero and an Irishman! And says he will wait on P.M. on his return, which will be soon.

I have a telegram from Balmoral announcing arrival and ceaseless rain; crops, however, looking well.

Yours,

B

Here a gale of three days, hardly finished.

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[4] Lord W. Beresford.

CHAPTER XV

August–December 1879

ANOTHER TROUBLED AUTUMN

Lord William Beresford was not the only officer from South Africa whom the Queen desired her Prime Minister to see—"A violent attempt that I should receive Lord Chelmsford here," he wrote on August 30th, "I have firmly declined. Having virtually recalled him from his command for reasons expressed, and in my mind peremptory, I can only receive him officially in Downing Street." Interviews which the Prime Minister himself considered necessary were sufficiently irksome, and he had no intention of adding unnecessarily to their number. "Monday the Prime Minister of the Dominion comes down here attended by Jem Daly who will take him off the next morning." Pending the arrival of the Canadian big-wig, Beaconsfield jotted down for Lady Bradford's edification such items of foreign news as he had received—"Wolseley writes in good spirits and evidently thinks that he shall make a good and quick job of it. General Lazareff, the commander of the Mysterious Russian Army in Central Asia, is dead, and I believe all his troops, 30,000, strong, are dying. So much for Merve! . . . If Haymerle is Austrian Minister we have a safe man for England. I sate next to him in Congress."

The visit of the Dominion statesman, though satisfactory in other respects, was every bit as exhausting to his host as Beaconsfield had expected:

Hughenden Manor,
September 2nd, 1879

The Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada arrived yesterday and departed by early train this morning, having given me a bad night and leaving me very exhausted. He is gentlemanlike, agreeable, and very intelligent, a considerable man, with no Yankeeisms except a little sing-song occasionally at the end of a sentence. It is a pity these people always come when everybody is scattered. It would not have been half as exhausting to have given him a London dinner, or more. But it was necessary for many grave reasons that he should not depart and feel on his return like the Duchess of Marlboro' "that she had had no attention paid to her." Considering that the Princess Louise is Vicequeen of Canada, it is to be regretted that Lorne's Prime Minister, the head too of the English Conservative party, should not have been invited to dine with our Sovereign the day he was sworn in of the Privy Council at Osborne.

I have, however, another affair hanging over me which terribly distresses and depresses me; to be President, in about a fortnight, of the Royal Bucks Agricultural Association; at all times a painful effort, but at this moment so critical in the condition of the Agricultural world, entailing on me more thought and labor than if I had to bring forward a great measure in Parliament.

Carey's letter was so disgusting that I am quite sorry he was not shot.

By the by, the Canadian Chief is said to be very like your humble servant, though a much younger man. I think there is a resemblance. He said the Princess is a great success in Canada, which was a toss-up; but she is extremely gracious, speaks to everybody, and is interested in everything and skates divinely! It would rather seem that Lady Dufferin was not very popular. She was thought "reserved and dry." I fear that Lorne, though he tries hard, has not made them forget Dufferin.

Haymerle it is settled is to succeed Andrassy, though it will not be announced at present. This is an anti-Russian appointment and will suit England well. He is not a great noble—I believe a plebeian, and looks one; nor will he set the Danube on fire. But he has great experience in affairs, thoroughly knows his business and is honorable.

Yours ever,

B

September 5th seems to have been a day of unusual leisure, for though he had nothing in particular to write about he sat down and wrote to both sisters—"This is only to say, How d'ye do?" he explained to Lady Chesterfield, "for I am like our Minister at Washington who invariably begins his letters 'I wonder why I write for I have really nothing to say'—and I always wonder why I am so silly as to read such letters." To Lady Bradford he discoursed about the upbringing of the young Princes on which subject he had already commented when he had first been informed of the project of giving them a naval training:

Hughenden Manor,
September 5th, 1879

. . . The arrangements about the two young Princes are all at sea again, or, rather they are not at sea; and I almost doubt whether they ever will be. I always thought it unwise that they should both go in the same ship, but I only get snubbed for my constitutional interference, which now, certain persons are beginning to think not absolutely without reason.

I have not yet read Raikes's speech which I shall do, as you direct me. I see, G. Hamilton has been discoursing at the Cutlers' feast. I must try also to read that; but I find it very difficult to tackle a speech at this moment.

Our skies have got gloomy again; but we have had a week without rain, which people seem to think a miracle.

Adieu!

Yours,

B

The comparative leisure of these early September days was brought to an abrupt end by the shocking news of the murder at Cabul of Cavagnari, the British Envoy to Afghanistan:

Hughenden Manor,
September 10th, 1879

It has been quite out of my power to write to you, my attention being entirely absorbed by the awful catastrophe of Cabul, and the necessary measures to take in consequence. I have decided on them and shall not, as at present advised, summon either Parliament or the Cabinet. It is one of the cases where one must not shrink from responsibility; but I have had to think and write so much, to see people too, that it was impossible for me to attend to anything else.

I have heard from Bradford on ye 9th and have written to him by this post. I do not see why friends should not meet because there has been a national disaster and, therefore, I have fixed the 23rd inst. for your arrival here and I hope you will stay at least till the end of that week. I hope the young ladies will accompany you. I have no party of any kind and fear they will not be amused; no dancing, no charades, no lawn tennis! A dreary prospect!

Poor Lord Cranbrook left me this morning. He left London for the Highlands on the previous Friday with a letter from Cavagnari ending, "Have no uneasiness about anything here." The telegrams caught him on his arrival in the land of Athole and he had to return and then, on that return, to have to come down instantly to me. He knocked up last night at 10 o'clock and retired. I had to sit up and write to the Queen at great length and many others, all of which were ready for him this morning when he departed at 9 o'clock. And not a Secretary, though Mr. Alg. Turnor had left me in the morning.

Yours ever,

B

Hughenden Manor,
September 11th, 1879

I sent you a hurried line yesterday and another to-day. I have had a sharp 8 and 40 hours, or so, but am perfectly calm. It is a horrible business because the Queen has lost some admirable servants, but for no other reason. It will not, in the slightest degree, change or affect the policy of H.M.'s Government, but, on the contrary, confirm and consolidate it. I have good accounts this morning of the state of our troops and of their preparedness. I was a little nervous about transport, but am not now.

The Duke of Montrose is to be the new Thistle. I dare say Rosslyn will be furious with me. I greatly regard Rosslyn and hardly know the Duke of Montrose; but I cannot distribute these honors from feelings of private friendship. I hope the rank, his historic and illustrious name and the claim arising from the rather unrequited services of his father, may reconcile the disappointed to ye choice.

Yours,

B

His letters until Lady Bradford's arrival were concerned chiefly with another disliked, but necessary interview, and with the much-dreaded meeting of the Buckinghamshire Agricultural Society:

Hughenden Manor,
September 16th, 1879

Sir H. Elliott, our Ambassador at Vienna, dined here yesterday and went off this morning. He invited himself, having something to say and Lord Salisbury being absent. I don't think he told me anything which I did not know, and I rather dislike Hughenden being made a safety-valve of Hatfield. However, as the Faery says, "you should always see everybody. They tell you something which is not in Despatches."

Your sister comes on the 23rd. This prevents my asking any other lady and I fear that Bradford, without a woman, will be bored; but I can't help it and I have asked some amusing men. So we must hope for the best. They all come on the 23rd: you mention 22nd in your last (but one). Bradford fixed 23rd but if you can come on 22nd I can receive you without inconvenience.

Yours ever,

B

Hughenden Manor,
September 18th, 1879

I am now going off to this infernal affair, one of the most difficult, at this time, that is conceivable.

But I just thank you for your letter this moment received.

I heard from Prince Hal to-day, but he pretended to me, of course, that he was going to Copenhagen.

You will meet Sir Evelyn Wood on Tuesday who, the Queen tells me, is extremely agreeable.

Yours ever,

B

Hughenden Manor,
September 19th, 1879

I did very well yesterday at Aylesbury and am not the worse for it.

What I predicted to you about Cetawayo, etc., has come right.

The *Times* is very angry that I did not tell them yesterday all the secrets of H.M. Government. That I care little for, but I regret the two half columns of incoherent nonsense which they have given to what I said. There can be no excuse for it in the difficulty of the situation, as the other papers, so far as I can judge, are fair enough; particularly *Morning Post* which I read. Unfortunately critics, and the world in general, always refer to the *Times* Reports as the authentic version; an old superstition, but like other superstitions, influential.

Yours ever,

B

Lord Beaconsfield had been determined that nothing should happen to prevent Lady Bradford's visit; but after her departure he decided to summon the Cabinet:

Hughenden Manor,
October 1st, 1879

I have been very busy ever since you went and it is hard work without secretaries. At the same time I believe it is better that I have none here.

The Cabinet is summoned for next Monday. Lord Cranbrook only returns from Balmoral on Friday, so it was difficult to hold it sooner. Monday gives the scattered members time to collect themselves—and their thoughts.

I don't think I should have written these stupid lines, which I do with a wearied hand, but I wanted much to thank you for the new mitts which are delightful and the little words which introduced them to

Yours ever,

B

In reply to a letter from Lady Bradford he explained that the Cabinet on Monday was not the beginning of the regular November Cabinets, "but an extraordinary one which I hope may not be followed by others. There is a great deal going on throughout the world; but what it will all end in—as the age of prophecy like the age of chivalry is past—no one can foresee." Among other questions which occupied the attention of the Cabinet was the plight of the landed aristocracy, if we may judge by Beaconsfield's letter to Lady Bradford on October 7th:

10 Downing Street,
October 7th, 1879

I hope you have won the race, which is possible as they say "everybody has his turn"—though I have heard the apophthegm in coarser tongue. They say now, however, as the consequence of the landed break-up, that there are to be no more turf and no more London seasons. All our friends have shut up their houses, or are to do so. It will be an excuse for some who ought to have done so under any circumstances. There is no doubt of one; Burghley—but this I think must be her Ladyship's temper as much as his Lordship's ruin. A good many more were mentioned at the Council yesterday, but I have forgotten them so I hope they may not be true. To my surprise, however, your friend Duke of Richmond and Gordon who throughout has been quite sceptical of smash, announced that his news from Sussex was the very worst; and that his men with leases, were throwing up! I am sorry for the country, still more for him, whom I like, though I am also told we lost the Banffshire Election because I made him Lord Lieutenant—he is so hated! Why? . . .

For myself, I could live in a garret provided it was well white-washed and very clean.

I came up yesterday early to see Salisbury, a very long conference and the Cabinet still longer, and now I am returning in ten minutes to Hughenden without any news from Cabul. It looks as if there had been, or rather was, a battle; for they may be still fighting. So much the better.

I found Monty here, just arrived and he dined with me yesterday. He has gone off this morning to No. 42: I think at Melbury. He says he will be with me in a week. I want him and could have commanded his presence, but I can't work with a man perpetually sighing and whose thoughts are in another place. In a week's time, I hope, he will think only of me.

Kind words to your host and hostess.

Yours ever,

B

Hughenden Manor,
October 9th, 1879

I smelt gunpowder in my last letter and it has come. I wish Roberts had more force. It is clear that from the first we have suffered from want of transport, and though there are troops enough they are still at too great a distance.

However, I will only think of your own victory which is very triumphant.[1] I wrote a line of congratulation to Bradford yesterday, who, being Master of the Horse, deserves to win. My household is much excited by the event. I suspect B.'s valet must have "put them on." I fear they are all on the turf; even Mr. Baum.

The peacocks are beginning to get proud again, their tails developing as the leaves fall.

It is hardly worth sending this.

Yours ever,

B

Faithful to his practice Beaconsfield went to Quarter Sessions on the 13th, and "Saw Tom Drake who had won £100 on Chippendale . . . and who said Bradford had won £1,000. I hope that is so; I expect to see you in a tiara and the young ladies in several new dresses." On his return at 5 o'clock he found awaiting him two messengers, several telegrams, two in cypher from the Queen, and boxes and letters without end. "I thought first of resigning, for I am extremely fatigued; but I have not yet done so, or would write to you more at length."

His letters for the rest of the month until he left Hughenden for the autumn Cabinets in London were concerned mainly with the pressure of work occasioned by the situation in Afghanistan:

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[1] Lord Bradford won the Cesarewitch with Chippendale.

Hughenden Manor,
October 18th, 1879

Monty *is* here. This is an answer to your last enquiry.

The papers will tell you of Roberts' energetic conduct at Cabul—but there are some things which they may not have told you as yet, Yacoob Khan has abdicated and would not enter the city with our general; he sent his son. Yacoob says, he "would rather be a grass cutter in the English army than Emir of Afghanistan." Roberts has arrested and placed under surveillance three of the greatest notables; and if their guilt be proved, they will be hanged. Yacoob, perhaps, has a twinge or two and is trying to get out of a scrape.

Salisbury's speech (his dinner speech, I have not read the others) is masterly. It must affect opinion and make the country feel that this is not a crisis to crack jokes, like your friend and admirer, Harcourt.

I am glad you are riding; the weather here delicious, but the days too brief. The best way is to go out in the early morn, but that plays the deuce with business which is very urgent at present.

Yours,

B

Hughenden Manor,
October 20th, 1879

. . . There is a great deal of business going on. I had intended to have summoned the Cabinet for the November sittings on the 4th of that month, but I fear we must meet before then, though I hope only for once. Monty is gone off for a couple of days to see his octogenarian aunt. It is very inconvenient for me, but I never grudge visits in that quarter and should feel I incurred a terrible responsibility if I did not rather encourage them.

I hope B. will not lose all his gains at Newmarket and that the tiara and the various dresses have already been purchased and paid for.

Yours ever,

B

Hughenden Manor,
October 30th, 1879

Monty and Dyke have gone off; I proceed by a later train. You ask whether I return to Hughenden after Hatfield? You forget the November Cabinets are at hand. They commence the 4th of next month, and I should not be surprised if they continued throughout it, as these are busy times.

Ought I to send these stupid lines, or not? Perhaps it is better, but it might have been telegraphed.

Mr. Baum had an accident last night and is on crutches to-day. This is terrible. I have a person with me to whom I have never spoken and who will not be of the least use to me.

Yours ever,

B

In a letter to Lady Chesterfield Beaconsfield expressed his regret that Count Schouvaloff, the Russian Ambassador, was now recalled:

10 Downing Street,
November 5th, 1879

A terrible time; Cabinets every day and ceaseless business in the intervals.

I have only just come up from the Cabinet and found poor Schouvaloff waiting in the reception room to say farewell: he called yesterday, but I was at the Cabinet. He is recalled, and not to be Minister, or anything else I fear. He is considered too German and too English. Prince Lobanoff is to be his successor.

I went down to Hatfield last Thursday to meet Lord Lyons and some other Diplomats and stayed until Monday. It was agreeable and amusing and, perhaps, instructive. On my return, I found Count Münster fresh from Germany.

I am too exhausted to write more.

Adieu! my dear.

B

"The Prince of Wales has come back very Russian, they say." Thus Beaconsfield in his letter to Lady Bradford on November 9th. On the 11th he had more to say on the subject:

10 Downing Street,
November 11th, 1879

No Brighton for me and certainly no visiting for Monty. The November Cabinets really only commenced to-day, and probably will proceed through the month, for business was never more pressing and, I might almost say, more important.

The Prince of Wales says that the Czarevitch said to him, that the friendly feeling that existed between him and the Prince could never be extended to the two nations until there was a change in the English Government. So I suppose Prince of Wales has ratted. . . .

Monty was very much amused with his Claremont party. Claremont is a beautiful place; a large park and wondrous woods.

The Cabinet which lasted nearly 3 hours is just over, and I am very tired and suffering rather.

B

"The dinner at the Guildhall was very successful," he wrote on the 13th. "It was the most crowded banquet that Gog and Magog ever looked down upon." And on the 14th —"I saw the famous Daisy [2] and her sister; very like each other, and though I sate next to one (at a round table) did not at once discover which was the precious flower; they are so alike, same color, size and costume." Lady Bradford, by a display of ignorance, actual or assumed, of the normal working of the machinery of Government, succeeded in eliciting from the hard-worked Minister a letter couched in terms of pained astonishment:

10 Downing Street,
November 16th, 1879

Your surprise at our having another Cabinet makes me feel that I have utterly failed, notwithstanding several attempts, in making you comprehend the state of affairs here.

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[2] Miss Maynard, afterwards Countess of Warwick.

In November, the Government meets to consider and arrange their Bills and business for the ensuing Session. These meetings go by the name of the November Cabinets and are, in number, generally between 6 and 8; that is in quiet times—and these are not quiet times.

The Cabinet meets again to-morrow. We cannot meet now *de die in diem,* as we did at first, because the experts who are drawing up the Bills we have decided on, could not keep pace with us; but we must have two or three a week, and I should be content if they closed by the end of the month.

We seem to be in for a premature hard, black frost, and I cannot venture out, but I am pretty well as I hope you are. I do not know whether anyone will come and lunch here to-day. I keep this ditchwater letter open in the hope they may tell me something, if they appear, that may amuse you. . . . Monty and Barrington came to lunch; but the latter was so full of his speech at Wye that he was almost as stupid and uninteresting as

Yours ever,

B

The Prime Minister's plans were upset and his temper a little ruffled by a change in the Queen's time-table, and by the refusal of an offer made by him to his former friend Henry Lennox:

10 Downing Street,
November 19th, 1879

Yesterday I received a telegram from Balmoral postponing my audience, fixed for next Saturday, till the following

Wednesday—"but a valued favorite servant of ours and especially of the Prince's, died this morning, and I will not leave without paying the last respect to his memory. I shall therefore leave this on Tuesday." And this morning, a letter containing a long biography of the dear deceased, duly arrives. All this complicates and confuses our arrangements, as there were hopes of our Cabinets closing the beginning of the week.

I see little hope of our meeting in town as I think, now, I shall go to Hughenden from Windsor, and it may be weeks before you pass through London and I see you for ten minutes, and then not alone.

My letters are wretched. I see nobody but Secretaries of State and hear of nothing but business. I suppose there is nobody in town, but when my daily work is over I am too dull and exhausted to call on anyone, even if there were such.

Yours ever,

B

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10 Downing Street,
November 24th, 1879

. . . Schouvaloff lunched here, I think on Friday. The death in the Royal Family sadly disturbed his arrangements as he was to have visited the Empress at Cannes, and our gracious Sovereign was obliged to put him off for a week in consequence of the royal decease. I have succeeded in getting him his farewell audience for Thursday next, for which he seems greatly obliged to me. I hope the Queen may invite him to dine. After all, he is the only Russian who at least pretends to be our friend, and his disgrace at his own Court is attributable to his supposed friendship to this country. Really it means his friendship to peace and commonsense, neither of which is popular at St. Petersburg.

I offered Henry Lennox the Deputy Surveyorship of the New Forest, which half the world is candidate for. All my colleagues, to whom I broke my intention, protested against my madness in so doing. Will you believe it, that Henry declined the post, and also, if it become vacant a Commissionership of Customs, which he understood I was reserving for him. He will not leave the House of Commons or take anything but a high post; he absolutely intimated the Cabinet!!

Don't say anything about this.

Your letters are very welcome.

Yours ever,

B

The postponed visit to Windsor duly took place on November 26th:

10 Downing Street,
November 26th, 1879

I am now going to have my audience at Windsor—at half past two, though our Sovereign does not arrive until between 9 and 10 this morning! What nerve! What muscle! What energy! Her Minister is very deficient in all three. The fogs and frosts of this harsh November have terribly knocked me down. I shall drop down to Hughenden to-night, even though there is a chance of a Cabinet to-morrow! That is terrible, but I cannot bear this atmosphere. All this too egotistical. I was much amused by your accurate and picturesque description of a certain "Chamber of Horrors."

Monty goes with me, but I don't think he will remain more than a couple of days. He is beginning to sigh and look distrait. However, if there be Cabinets, or he is asked to Windsor, which of course is impending, he will have to go; not five hundred swans, fluttering all their wings in chorus, would be able to keep him back.[3]

Your letters are very welcome to

Yours ever,

B

Windsor Castle,
November 26th, 1879

I wrote to you this morning a little line from town; and I seize five minutes to send you this from Windsor. I found my Royal Mistress in great force; not at all looking as if she had travelled all night; and I had more than an hour's audience, interesting and agreeable. Schouvaloff is to dine here on Friday, and will meet Princess Louise who is to return to Canada in January.

Yours ever,

B

While Beaconsfield was thus occupied in London, Gladstone was carrying on a campaign against the Government in Midlothian:

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[3] A reference to Monty Corry's intimacy with the Ilchesters, at whose place, Abbotsbury, there was a swannery.

Hughenden Manor,
November 28th, 1879

A hurried line with an impatient messenger. You are quite right. I have not read a single line of all this row, but Monty has told me something and has promised me to make notes, in case it falls to my lot to notice his wearisome rhetoric. What a waste of powder and shot! Because all this was planned on the wild assumption that Parliament was going to be dissolved, whereas, as Sir George Bowyer, apparently from authority, has just informed the world, Parliament will probably not be dissolved till the year after next.

Affairs are busy and pressing. Salisbury, when his time is most precious, having to luncheon one day and dine the following, at Windsor! These were the obsequies of Schouvaloff. Monty is of great use to me and, therefore, goes off to-morrow! Such is life! . . .

"The Faery is not well," he wrote on December 1st. "Supposed to have caught a cold. I don't believe in colds. They are always the names for other things. The banquets to be given to Knights of the Bath and Knights of something else, to be put off, etc. etc!" His negative diagnosis proved to be correct:

Hughenden Manor,
December 4th, 1879

The Faery's was really not a cold, but a bilious attack, which ought to have been prevented before she left Scotland, but which was, no doubt, accelerated and aggravated by travelling in this savage weather and living so long in a more savage country with still more savage customs. I believe Highland burials with whisky are worse than Irish wakes.

I felt it my duty to beg that she would take great care of herself, and "deign to obey her physician." I wrote from a hint which had reached me. Upon this I received a letter from Jenner saying, "the Queen has just commanded me to write and let you know that the only point in reference to which she had not followed the advice of her physician, was in going to the dinner to Count Schouvaloff, which she did because she knew your Lordship wished it."

Was this a snub? It was not. There came next morning a most affectionate letter entering into minute details and ending, "I shall be all right in a day or two." . . .

With so much illness about, Lord Beaconsfield found the necessity for travelling backwards and forwards between Hughenden and London in wintry weather a considerable risk:

To Lady Chesterfield

Hughenden Manor,
December 6th, 1879

I hope, dearest friend, you are well in spite of this Siberian clime. I went up to the Cabinet on Wednesday at the risk of my life—but in all my armor and literally, going and returning, stepped from the carriage to the train—so I escaped unhurt; but have not been out of the house since, notwithstanding sunshine and blue skies.

The Lord Chancellor could not attend the Cabinet, having congestion of one of his lungs. This frightened me.

I have, however, a good account of him to-day. He would be an incalculable loss. He is the greatest man of his class since Lord Mansfield. None of the other eminent lawyers, not even Selborne and the Lord Chief Justice, can hold a candle to him. His mind is the most penetrating I ever encountered.

Mark Firth has agreed to stand for Sheffield, and if any one can win that seat for the Tories 'tis he. If we are successful it will be a fine answer from the country to Gladstone's rhodomontade and rigmarole.

Adieu!

B

The Queen getting all right.

Early in December there arrived a Despatch from the British Ambassador in Berlin which Beaconsfield read with special interest:

Hughenden Manor,
December 8th, 1879

. . . I read a Despatch from Odo Russell yesterday, very curious; not a private letter to Lord Salisbury but a regular Despatch "very confidential." It gives an account of a very confidential conversation with Comte St. Vallier, the French Ambassador at Berlin, as to his recent visit to Bismarck at Varzin.

He found the great man in much better health than the newspaper report, "reading over again all Lord Beaconsfield's novels." He told St. Vallier that a first-rate work of fiction was the only thing that gave him distraction; that riding, shooting, farming, planting, and hunting even wolves and wild boars, he still was thinking of politics—but with a fine novel, he was quite lost. He said he had never written works of fiction, because he could not do two things at the same time; that all the *creative* power that he had, he gave to politics; otherwise he should probably write novels. And he said a good deal more. He was very frank and satisfactory, according to St. Vallier, as to general politics.

What Bismarck says as to writing fiction is perfectly true. I have told you the same thing. I never could do two things at the same time; at least two which required the creative power.

When I was made leader of the Opposition, I was obliged to leave off writing; from "Tancred," my last then, to "Lothair" 23 years; and from "Lothair" nine years, being a Minister.

Yours ever,

B

Beaconsfield had intended visiting the Queen from Hughenden and returning the same day. But the Queen had determined otherwise:

Hughenden Manor,
December 11th, 1879

. . . Here, at this moment, I am in much confusion. Faery, who had consented to an arrangement by which I was to go to her early, if fine, on Saturday and return before sunset, has kicked over the traces and insists I should go on Monday and stay till Wednesday. She runs off herself on 18th. She knows that Monty is away, Miss Stopford having written to him about something by which he got found out. So she absolutely orders that he is to be summoned and "attend" me. He will get his ears boxed, I fancy.

Sir M. Biddulph new Equerry.

Yours ever,

B

Hughenden Manor,
December 17th, 1879

I can only write to you a little line, having just returned here from Windsor (half past 1) and the messenger waiting must depart by half past 3—and much to reply to and answer . . .

Visit to the Faery very agreeable. It was a perpetual audience, and at last daughters tapped at the door at half past 9 before dinner to break up the charming flow. I heard afterwards from "dearest Jane" that I had never been so delightful; with your knowledge of human nature you can easily conceive who the delightful person really was. We are never so pleased as when we please others, and, in our gratified generosity, attribute to them the very results we have ourselves accomplished.

The visit once threatened to be a little disturbed by the unexpected arrival of the Empress but it was all managed very well; though too long now to talk about. I will try to write more seriously to-morrow.

B

As an afterthought he added to a letter written a day or two later, the following:

It may amuse. My Christmas box was the Windsor uniform "given to him out of personal regard and friendship" and which no Prime Minister has ever had except Lord Melbourne, Duke of Wellington and Aberdeen.

His Christmas letter to Lady Chesterfield was chiefly about Afghanistan:

Hughenden Manor,
December 24th, 1879

I never believed in Merrie Xmas and, generally speaking, I detest anniversaries; but there is no time Dearest friend that I have not kind thoughts for you and so, though I am touching Xmas Eve, I send them. May I send them yet often! Though this seems a word for myself as well as for you.

Sheffield did not disappoint me until I read the poll. Then I saw we might have won.

I have had four telegrams to-day from Afghanistan. I think it very likely that there will be a great battle on Xmas Day. All my accounts are favorable: communications clear; sufficient transport; and great enthusiasm among our soldiers of all races. Nor any of the great tribes, Afreedis, and Mohmands and all that, rising or troubling us. I think the insurrection was premature and was meant when the Russian Army in the Spring would be at hand.

Yours ever,

B

In his remaining letters during the year, he gave his opinion on the higher command of the army, and informed

Lady Bradford of a visit proposed to be paid to him by the Prince of Wales:

Quite to yourself Hughenden Manor,
December 26th, 1879

. . . Sir Garnet Wolseley has not disappointed me. He is one of those men who not only succeed, but succeed quietly. Nothing can give you an idea of the jealousy, hatred, and all uncharitableness of the Horse Guards against our only soldier. The Horse Guards will ruin this country unless there is a Prime Minister who will have his way, and that cannot be counted on. Fortunately he has the power, if he have only the determination. You cannot get a Secretary of War to resist the Cousin of the Sovereign with whom he is placed in daily and hourly communication. I tremble when I think what may be the fate of this country if, as is not unlikely, a great struggle occur with the Duke of Cambridge's generals!

So far as I am concerned I cannot give a bright bulletin, for I have neither air nor exercise.

Besides all these public and private annoyances, I have just heard that Prince Hal wishes to be my guest, or rather, I should say, announces that he will be my guest on the 12th of next month. I can ask very few persons to meet him and they are not to be the usual set—"Powis(?) Peto, and the fat knight"—but grave, though agreeable signors. I wonder whom he will select.

Don't mention all this to anybody as I don't want it talked about, and if Colonel Maude is at Weston, as he probably is, it will be chattered over all England.

I am anxious to hear how you are—and what are your symptoms.

Yours ever,

B

Hughenden Manor,
December 29th, 1879

I got your most agreeable letter dated 27th this morning. Yesterday, I had four telegrams from Afghanistan and sent one, with the first news, to Weston; but I fear your office was not open on Sunday. However, it reached you I hope, very early to-day. I believe the smash of the enemy is complete, nor do I think they will rally. I expect to meet Parliament, both as regards Asia and Afric, with a clean bill of health.

I can only ask four guests to meet H.R.H. as he does not come alone. I shall give him the rooms you occupied during your first visit here. The guests he has selected are Salisbury, Rosslyn, Dyke, and Orford; but the latter won't come and is, I really fear and believe, very ill. He is trying to find restoratives in the waters of Bath, which it seems to me, are coming into fashion again.

I have had an anxious time about these Afghan affairs, and am glad to enjoy a soft and sunny walk in the park this morn.

Adieu!

B

CHAPTER XVI

January–April 1880

DISSOLUTION AND—DEFEAT

New Year's Day brought the Prime Minister a host of messages from a great variety of people:

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
January 1st, 1880

I hate anniversaries as much as you do; but you would be amused with the various "kind wishes" I have received this morning. I won't dwell on Sandringham or Bruxelles, though one was a Princess and the other a Queen; but I think you would be diverted by one from the Prince of Bagdad, my "devoted though distant admirer." I remember him in this country when he made one of those civilising visits the Orientals are fond of.

Osborne has sent me, as an Etrenne, a most beautiful book, so rich in illustrations of the Teutonic, Italian, and English schools of art, that I am sure, it will occupy and delight you on your next visit here.

Our news is very good this morning from the seat of war. Baker has returned from a successful expedition and the ascertained loss of the enemy on the 23rd-24th was

3,000; ours not half 300. There has been nothing like it in point of numbers since Agincourt!

Yours ever,

B

The expedition referred to was into tribal territory across the frontier of Afghanistan. In a letter to Lady Chesterfield he commented scathingly on the reception which the news of this success had met with in some quarters—"The disappointment of that patriotic body, the English Opposition, is remarkable. I cannot comprehend such feelings, and I have been often and long in opposition." He was busy making arrangements for the Prince of Wales's visit. "I have a great deal of business and ought to be in town Cabineting, etc.," he told Lady Chesterfield, "but the Prince's visit next week keeps me here." And "Who do you think Prince Hal has selected for the fourth guest?" he asked Lady Bradford. "B. O. Falstaff again!"[1] But he had other preoccupations and responsibilities. The Session was bound to be one of critical importance, for Parliament was drawing towards its appointed end; and though in January Lord Beaconsfield was thinking of a dissolution in the autumn rather than in the spring, it was impossible to say how matters would develop. He thought, therefore, that it was desirable that the Queen should open Parliament in person. "I have only a moment to hope that you are well," he wrote on the 7th, "and that your patient is promising.

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[1] Mr. Bernal Osborne. It will be remembered that Lord Orford had been obliged to decline on account of illness.

It is not settled, but I am inclined to think the Faery will do it. It is left to me to decide; but with so many conditions and considerations that the responsibility is not slight." It was still uncertain, though probable, when he wrote again on January 13th:

Hughenden Manor,
January 10th, 1880

Your visit to London was so brief that I hardly think the few lines I sent to you there reached you; but they followed you of course.

The affair is not quite settled, but I rather think the Faery will open Parliament. Considering warlike operations, both in Africa and Asia, have been brought to a triumphant conclusion; that the Parliament has been singularly loyal and patriotic; supporting Her Government in their external policy by many Liberal votes; and conferring Her title as Empress of India by majorities irrespective of all party, it will be a gracious act to give it a blessing before it expires.

Your letters are most agreeable. My Secretary Algernon Turnor, a great man in the hunting field, writes to us that that wise man, the Duke of Belvoir, told him gravely that Rosebery and Sir C. Dilke had been asked to meet the Prince here!

I heard to-day from the Faery, who highly approves of the visit. I thought, on the contrary, we should have had our ears boxed!

Adieu! We shall now, I hope, soon meet.

Your

B

The visit proved to be a great success, and was duly described in two letters.

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
January 13th, 1880

The visit has been, all say, a great success; but H.R.H. does not depart until late this afternoon and I can only get hold of ten minutes to write to you, by messenger who must depart immediately. He praised the house, praised his dinner, praised the pictures, praised everything; was himself most agreeable in conversation, said some good things and told more.

When I found out that both Rosslyn and B. O. had been his companions at Cumberland Lodge, I was afraid they must have exhausted all their resources; but I was wrong. Success inspired them, and the dinner was like a pantomime where there are two clowns—and both capital ones.

He retired at midnight, and Teesdale says that in regard to late hours, eating, drinking, everything, there is a great and highly beneficial change in his life. . . .

We played at whist in the evening; his own choice. I had hoped to have induced them to play nap which would have left me alone, for I don't understand that mystery. But he would not have it and insisted on playing with B. O. against Salisbury and myself, at whist. He beat us, which does not displease him.

To-day he rambled about the grounds, and then took a drive in a snowstorm and in an open carriage to Wycombe and about. Now we are all going to a luncheon which will be as elaborate as a dinner. As for myself I have no appetite, for I have not been out of the house for some days, being almost as asthmatic as poor Bradford.

To-morrow I go to town to remain and begin Cabinets on Thursday. I hope Bradford is better. I had Kidd down here, who gave me an inhaling spray which did me a great deal of good; but what it consists of I don't know.

Yours ever,

B

10 Downing Street,
January 15th, 1880

After a long Cabinet, I can only send you a little line—1st to thank you for your agreeable letter, 2nd to conclude, as you wish, my report of the visit.

They returned from their barouche drive in a snowstorm in high spirits; his companions, Monty and the two clowns, B.O. affecting seriousness and sense of hardship. His Grace the Lord Commissioner, on the other hand, rollicking.

H.R.H. disappeared then for an hour and told me he had been writing an account of Hughenden to the Princess. Then there was a very successful but very long luncheon, and then, after a little wandering about the house, he departed, having, he said, "greatly enjoyed himself."

Salisbury behaved very well and helped me much.

No allusion to the Tattooing which they say is very small.

I have not seen D. of S's book yet—Metternich has employed me, and Lord Wellesley by Torrens very good.

Ever yours,

B

With the termination of the Prince's visit Beaconsfield returned to London and was at once caught up in a whirl of social and political engagements:

10 Downing Street,
January 19th, 1880

As you have seen business is very pressing; Cabinets every day since I came up, and we only do not meet this morning because the expected Indian Mail has not yet arrived.

I am glad to hear of some progress with Bradford.

I dined on Saturday at Gloucester House; a royal party, but very agreeable and a first-rate dinner, which even Prince Hal, very curious in such matters, noticed with much praise. The Tecks were there; Princess Louise, to whom the dinner was given; Princess Frederica, Leiningen, Lady Mandeville and Mr. and Mrs. Standish and B.O.

Yesterday I dined at Stafford House; a dinner also given to Princess Louise; a farewell one, as she departs on Wednesday. A worse dinner I never saw and poisonous claret. He must have sent round to some neighboring estaminet at 5 francs a head, and Gladstone liquor.

Prince Hal was there but no other royalties; but a miscellaneous æsthetical, etc., crew to interest and amuse the Queen of Canada. Duckworth, Sir Leighton Boehm, Monty, "the Mashels" and so on.

Adieu!

B

P.S. Get *Graphic* if you can. It will amuse you.

The inevitable result of these junketings was that the Prime Minister was once more confined to his house:

10 Downing Street,
January 23rd, 1880

. . . I have not been out since Monday and been obliged to ask Dr. Kidd to call on me, which is a bore. The worst is that Salisbury has knocked up and in the very heat and crisis of affairs, with daily Cabinets, Queen's Speeches and new Russian Ambassadors, is ordered not to attend to business; a feverish attack which always frightens one.

I hope Bradford is better, but how can he be?

Don't say anything to the world about Salisbury or the enemy will triumph.

Our friends are in good heart about Liverpool. I trust they have cause.

Ever yours,

B

This was bad, but within a week matters had become still worse:

10 Downing Street,
January 29th, 1880

I am unable to move, Salisbury is confined to his room at Hatfield and must do no work, the Lord Chancellor attacked by asthma for the first time was so frightened that he rushed to Bournemouth, where he found the fog blacker than here. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is in bed with influenza. Sandon is at Liverpool. Where John Manners's broken bones are I hardly know—but if there had been a Cabinet to-day *six* would have been absent.

The only bright thing at Downing Street are my rose-colored muftees. They are beautiful, and as comfortable as they are beautiful. Cardinal Manning who had a long interview this morning, seemed envious and regretted, I think, he had not his red stockings on.

The Faery sent up dearest Jane to report and sent me a stick, which took Her Royal fancy; made by a poor man in her isle, and of crabwood!

Adieu! Adieu!

B

In these circumstances the Prime Minister found the opening of Parliament with all its attendant ceremonies and duties more than he could himself manage:

10 Downing Street,
February 5th, 1880

I sent you something yesterday which I hope interested you. I thought you were going this morning to House of Lords, but Monty tells me not so. I was obliged to give up my share in the ceremony which with the dinner of yesterday and the debate of this evening, was beyond my physical powers. So the sword of State was carried by your friend the Duke of Richmond and Gordon—and the Duke of Northumberland was consoled for his never having anything to do, by bearing the Crown—rather a weighty and difficult office.

The world was much astonished at seeing Granby yesterday at my dinner. I don't see how he logically reached a place there; but that was his affair and I was very glad to see him in his ancient position.

I was with the Faery a long time yesterday and she was most agreeable and interesting.

I purpose calling on you to-morrow about noon, if I be alive. I hope to be in my place in House of Lords in two hours' time; but I have not yet put on a boot and am as shaky as a man can be, who has been shut up for two weeks.

Yours ever,

B

10 Downing Street,
February 6th, 1880

I am not yet up, but shall call on you at 12 o'clock.

I had great difficulty in speaking last night and what I did say, I said badly; but when you have been shut up for more than a fortnight it is difficult to conceive how the nervous system is affected, when you re-enter the world.

Yours ever,

B

Thereafter, Lady Bradford being in London, the correspondence ceases until the end of February when it is resumed on Beaconsfield's return from a visit to Windsor:

10 Downing Street,
February 28th, 1880

I came back very bad from Windsor, I believe the consequence of having to pace so often that terrible corridor—the Palace of the Winds; and could not call on you on my arrival in consequence, having to go to bed where I should have remained until now, had I not been obliged to get up to dine with Francis, where I should have been amused, had I been tolerably well.

Affairs are in such confusion that I hardly know when I can, or shall see [you?]. I had hoped, of course, this afternoon, but I have just been obliged to put off the Cabinet of this morning until a later, and still unsettled, hour, the House of Commons meeting on Saturday.

I can't make out whether you wish me to dine with you on the 2nd March, or the reverse. If you wish it, I am free; but have no compunction in throwing me over, as in theory I no longer dine out.

Yours ever,

B

It was early in March that the Cabinet decided upon an immediate dissolution. Beaconsfield had no need to write of these important matters, for Lady Bradford was still in London and he no doubt discussed them with her almost daily. Until he went to stay at Hatfield at the end of March—placed at his disposal by Lord Salisbury who had gone with his family to the South of France—he scarcely wrote at all, and such letters as he did write were occupied for the most part with trivial matters and referred only incidentally to the more important events which were in progress:

10 Downing Street,
March 17th, 1880

I had hoped we might have had a walk this morning, but a Cabinet has been called, and at 11 o'clock!

So much is going on and so many persons are pulling me one way or the other that I can't venture to make an appointment, but shall take my chance of seeing you at some odd moment I can snatch. I have got to go to Windsor to-morrow—early; 12 o'clock; but to remain till Friday which is a perilous tax at this moment.

I am sure you must have a great deal to tell me.

My afternoon is uncertain from my having to see Salisbury before his departure. Dined yesterday at Cadogans'; small party; Lansdownes were there, the rest all Tories who talked indelicately about nothing but the election; and, I thought, indiscreetly.

Yours ever,

B

To Lady Chesterfield

Hatfield House,
March 29th, 1880

How can there be news about the Election? Both sides have now placed their men and both are at the mercy of the Ballot, which baffles estimates. There can be no news now: only speculation and gossip. The seed is sown and we must await the harvest. I trust the electorate one will be better than our agricultural.

I should have written before, but have not a scrap of news. I received your two letters to-day and was very much obliged to you for them. To-day we have a lovely blue sky and floods of sunshine with a soft westerly wind. Existence is delightful with such an atmosphere; but until to-day we have had blasting east winds and I could only walk in sequestered nooks, and then clothed in furs. I wish you could give me a better account of your cough, but the soft wind will, I hope, cure it.

I am here alone with Monty when he does not go up to town to dine with Princesses. The eldest son of the house is canvassing Hertford with his brother-in-law, but sometimes returns for dinner.

Yours ever,

B

To Lady Bradford

Hatfield House,
March 29th, 1880

Your letter was most interesting; especially about Bolton. If a few seats of that character on which we do not count declare for the good cause, we shall win. It will be a great pleasure to all of us if Francis[2] wins, and for his own sake. I have not written before, for I have not a word to say. As for *news* about the elections—that no longer exists. . . .

The petty Boroughs of the west seem our weakest point in England. Alington ought to have kept Dorchester right, and Lady W.[3] Shaftesbury. Poole, Christchurch were always weak horses; but I fain hope we have a chance in both. I hope the Yorkshire mess may yet be cooked to our satisfaction. Wharncliffe is very wroth anent, but rather sanguine about Sheffield.

Ever yours,

B

Beaconsfield's absent host showed great thoughtfulness—"I drink Grand Chateau Margaux of 1870—exquisite—by special orders; but as it is not given to anyone else, I feel awkward, but forget my embarrassment in the exquisite flavor. All this because I mentioned once my detestation of hosts who give you an inferior claret at dinner. . . ." The first day of the poll was an anxious one for the Leader of the Tory party:

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[2] Col. the Hon. Francis Bridgeman.

[3] Lady Westminster.

Hatfield,
March 31st, 1880

What a date! I ardently hope that before you receive this, you will have learnt the success of Francis. It will be a consolation to you, whatever happens.

You send me a good deal of electoral gossip which always interests; especially when it comes from a private hand and not a sanguine whip, who only repeats what interested agents convey. I daresay, considering your quarters, that you know more really of the condition of the Western and S. Western Boros than we do. Lady Westminster writes to me that she hopes Shaftesbury is all right, notwithstanding Lord Wolverton who is personally interfering in the election and so violating the Privilege of Parliament.

We have an unexpectedly sharp contest here—Hertford, but I fancy now all right. They got frightened and every one, during the last two days, has been canvassing; so I am really alone in this vast building.

This is sad stuff to send to you, but at this awful pause my mind is a blank; but I am always

Yours,

B

The result of the first day's polling was a disagreeable surprise, showing, as it did, a considerable loss to the party in power:

Hatfield,
April 1st, 1880

Alas! alas! I cannot write a letter and almost thought of sending you a blank sheet, which at least would have shown my sympathy. In the general discomfiture, the success of Francis would have been to you a consolation!

I can no more at present.

With great affection,

Your

B

Hatfield House,
April 2nd, 1880

I return to town to-morrow and remain there while the dreadful ceremonies are performed. I suppose it may take six weeks—six weeks as disagreeable as can be easily conceived.

Never was so great a discomfiture with a cause so inadequate. I think, as far as I can collect, "hard Times" was the cry against us. The suffering want a change; no matter what, they are sick of waiting.

The wonderful poll in the City, the numbers at Westminster, the return of Wortley for Sheffield—Greenwich, (the only one of the Metropolitan Districts that has yet reached me) prove that the enlightened masses are with us. Had the dissolution been delayed, we should have had to encounter agricultural insurrection as well as our usual foes. The farmers are discontented, but they move and conspire slowly. We have been too quick for them. The Farmers Club have prepared some mischief, but not enough.

In a season or two, if fair, the agricultural world will return to its ancient loyalty.

Yours ever,

B

To Lady Chesterfield

April 2nd, 1880

I wish I could send you consolation, or attempt to disguise our discomfiture. . . . I take it for granted that Gladstone will get in for Midlothian if he cares to. He is at the head of the poll for Leeds. I fear Selina will take Francis' defeat at Bolton to heart. It is a great diappointment. He made a gallant fight and thought he was sure. I go to town to-morrow and shall pass through six as disagreeable weeks as can fall to the lot of man.

Your Plovers' eggs reached me and I shared them with Monty.

The final result of the election was, indeed, a tragic disappointment; for without taking into account 60 Irish Home Rulers, it left the Conservative party in the House of Commons more than 100 behind their Liberal rivals.

And Beaconsfield's letters at this time are those of a sorely smitten man:

To Lady Chesterfield

Downing Street,
April 4th, 1880

I can only write you one line to tell you that I am alive, notwithstanding this battle of Armageddon where I have to receive and endure blow after blow.

I returned from Hatfield yesterday and am now about to pass through the most painful passage in political life, the transition from power to obscurity; when everybody wants something and few can be gratified.

I hope, dear friend, you are pretty well and that the western breeze has cured your cold and vanquished your cough.

Ever your affectionate,

B

To Lady Bradford

Downing Street,
April 8th, 1880

I have nothing to say! a most dreary life and labor mine! Winding up a Government as hard work as forming one without any of its excitement. My room is filled with beggars, mournful and indignant, and my desk is covered with letters like a snowstorm.

It is the last and the least glorious exercise of power and will be followed, which is the only compensation, by utter neglect and isolation.

Yours ever,

B

Downing Street,
April 10th, 1880

I only write to you because I think you would prefer having a blank sheet to nothing. This is a blank sheet.

My life continues the same. Discomfited, defeated, and, if not disgraced, prostrate, by a singular anomaly and irony of fate I pass my life now in exercising supreme power;

making peers, creating baronets, and showering places and pensions on a rapacious crew.

The Faery arrives on the 17th and I am to be with her on the morning of 18th and stay a day or so.

Cochrane[4] has got his peerage at last. It will gain me a great many foes; but I could no longer resist, though he has lost the Isle of Wight.

Yours ever,

B

The question of Beaconsfield's successor was anything but simple. He advised the Queen to send for Lord Hartington as the official leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons. "Cochrane I told you was a peer," he reminded Lady Chesterfield on April 12th. "I told you also, that I should not be surprised were Hartington my successor—which will astonish and displease one or two of our friends." Neither Lord Hartington, nor Lord Granville, as it turned out, was prepared to form a Government without Mr. Gladstone; and since Mr. Gladstone was unwilling to serve under either of these two statesmen, the Queen was left with no alternative but to send for Mr. Gladstone himself. While these negotiations were in progress, Beaconsfield continued "granting and refusing peerages, guarding myself from terrible suitors who wish to attack me with 'bloody hands' and refusing to make everybody's fortunes, who has never succeeded in making it for himself." He kept his two correspondents informed of the fortunes of those in whom they were interested—"John Manners . . . is to have the red ribbon. He is the only one of the present Cabinet who was in the original Derby Cabinet of 1852, and has been in every one since of which I have been a member. He will be as proud as Cochrane." And in a letter to Lady Bradford on the 18th—"I have given Henry Lennox a place of £1,500 per annum; but I fear the first achievement of the House of Commons will be to take it from him. However, I have given him a chance. I hope also Monty will fall on his legs." This latter hope was fulfilled, as he told Lady Bradford on April 21st—"Monty is a baron bold, by the style and title of Lord Rowton of Castle Rowton in the County of Salop; and his aunt has given him the estate! So politics have not destroyed him."

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[4] Mr. Baillie Cochrane, who now became Lord Lamington.

In a letter to Lady Chesterfield on April 18th, he explained his plans:

Downing Street,
April 18th, 1880

My dearest friend,

Your kind letters console me in this life of dreary excitement in which I now exist. I hope it will not last much longer. I am now going to Windsor and until I see my gracious Sovereign I shall not know when I shall be free. There must be a Privy Council on Tuesday and I suppose on Wednesday there will be a final Cabinet.

Then there is to be a "meeting of the Party," but when and where I can't yet say. As the meeting consists of members of both Houses it will be difficult to find a fitting place of assemblage.

You are always sending me beautiful things—rare fruits and sweet flowers; I can only send you my love, and the affections of a fallen Minister are not worth much.

Yours ever,

B

The Cabinet decided to resign without meeting Parliament—"This morning a Cabinet," he told Lady Bradford on the 21st, "and then to Windsor for final operation. H.M. insists upon softening the catastrophe by my dining and sleeping at the Castle." His last letter from Downing Street was written to Lady Chesterfield on April 26th:

Dearest friend!

This is the last letter I shall write from this house, and it is to you.

I conclude the Cabinet will be announced to-morrow and that the Council to be holden for delivering up, and for receiving the Seals will be on Wednesday. As the Prime Minister has no seal I am spared taking a part in this dolorous ceremony, but on the day following shall have my farewell audience and kiss hands on abdication.

I go this afternoon to Hatfield where I shall stay till Tuesday and, then, I shall remain for a few days at Lord Beauchamp's, Belgrave Square, where to direct your next letter. You cannot write to me too often and if I do not reply frequently, do not suppose I do not wish to hear from you, but in solitude I have no materials for correspondence, and my pursuits in the country are of that absorbing character that they quite unfit me for letter writing, had I anything to say.

I saw Selina at the wedding yesterday which on the whole

THE EARL OF BEACONSFIELD

From a painting, by Theodora Blake Wingman, now at Weston

was a successful ceremony. To my great surprise all the Cambridge family attended—but not the Prince or Princess of Wales.

Adieu!

Yours,

Beaconsfield

Lord Beaconsfield lingered in London until the end of the month, when the curtain was finally rung down on his Administration and he retired to Hughenden in search of the complete solitude for which he pined:

To Lady Bradford

13 Belgrave Square,
April 28th, 1880

Your letter just come to hand and very welcome.

Yesterday morning I was summoned to Windsor from Hatfield; a long cold drive, but I picked up Lord Rowton *en route*. My audience was very long, and everything was said that could be said, but what was news yesterday is scarcely so to-day—and I arrived back too late for post.

I could perceive there was something concealed from somebody and hinted *that;* but the delusion existed that all was safe and that no danger was to be apprehended of the presence of Lowe or Dilke. Instead of them, without the slightest preparation for the catastrophe, she will be told that she must take this morning an avowed republican for a Cabinet Minister,[5] quite inexperienced in official life and little known in Parliament. It would have been better to have permitted Dilke to be one of her counsellors.

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[5] Mr. Joseph Chamberlain.

I shall leave town on Saturday but latish, so that if you have a festival I will attend it, though I should have preferred saying adieu! alone.

Yours ever,

B

To Lady Chesterfield

13 Belgrave Square,
April 29th, 1880

I believe Parliament opens to-day, but a mere form so I shall not go there.

I leave this on Saturday for Hughenden where, at last, I hope I shall be alone. My friends here, like all my friends, are very kind; but what I want is a dose of solitude.

I am sorry to say I must decline your kind invitation to Bretby. I had not seen the articles you sent me. I avoid newspapers which it was once my business to scan. I see only the *Times*—just to keep me *au fait* to what is going on.

Your letters will be always welcome—as many as you like—but you must not think I do not value them because they are not answered. I am naturally a terribly bad letter writer and only the bustle of official life kept me at all in epistolatory cue. I am no longer *responsible* in any sense.

Yours ever,

B

CHAPTER XVII

May–September 1880

A SUMMER AT HUGHENDEN

In spite of the disappointment of the General Election and the reaction inevitable after a spell of glorious but exacting power, there can be little doubt that Lord Beaconsfield found the slackening of the strain a great relief and the leisure which was suddenly thrust upon him, anything but disagreeable. "I am alone; I see nobody; I hear nothing," he wrote from Hughenden on May 10th, "which is all very convenient after the bustle of the last seven years."[1] He wished to hear as often as possible from his two correspondents, though he warned them that he would have little to offer them in return. "It is most kind of you to write to me and I wish you would write to me every day; but that I fear would be as unreasonable as it seems selfish. I have no return to make to you. I have been in a state of coma since I arrived here, and when it ceases I shall be absorbed in pursuits which are fatal to correspondence." Thus to Lady Bradford on May 6th. What the pursuits "fatal to correspondence" were, he did not say. The writing of *Endymion* was certainly one of them; but it is surprising that this work upon which he was engaged throughout the summer, should never have been mentioned until arrangements for its publication were completed in the autumn, in any of his letters either to Lady Bradford or to Lady Chesterfield. He continued to write occasionally to the latter and about twice a week to the former; but except on the proceedings of the Government and the tactics of the Opposition, the news which he wrote was of little importance:

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[1] Letter to Lady Chesterfield.

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
May 6th, 1880

. . . I shall come up to town on the 18th to meet the "party" on the following day, and then, on the 20th, attend the opening of Parliament. I don't suppose the Lords' labors this Session will much exceed the meeting.

Monty went up to town yesterday having naturally much to do. I think it very kind of him coming here at all. When I was of his age I rather chafed at being *"adscriptus glebæ."* Now it is different; solitude seems to me my only relief, but then you must people it with beings who are your society.

"The party" meets at Bridgewater House. Thank Bradford for a most amusing letter, his second, and tell him I will try to reply to them.

Ever yours,

B

Hughenden Manor,
May 7th, 1880

As we have now no privileged post to-morrow, which would bear to you Sunday tidings, I send you this little stupid line.

I wrote to H.R.H. about not attending his levee to-day, and I sent a trinket to Lady Beauchamp which I hope may maintain peace with the late Lord Steward, though I have not much hopes—having received a missile of menacing hospitality. I fear he will be very angry.

Monty went up to town on Wednesday having much to do, and I don't know when to expect him again, if ever. The weather here is very cold and the Shepherd, who is a wise man, tells me that the grass has ceased to grow for many days and the oats have been touched with frost.

The Faery has sent me her statuette in bronze; very good, very like.

With great affection,
Yours,
B

Hughenden Manor,
May 9th, 1880

Your letter was most agreeable—your letters always are. You said you had a great deal to tell me. Pray tell it and don't wait for responses from the Eremite, who sees no one, hears nothing, and is absorbed in his own thoughts.

Except the first two days when I lived in the air, the N.E. blast which then arrived, as Gladstone did after me, has brought back my asthma and kept me much a prisoner.

I hope Bradford has escaped. I see he still wins races and that, I suppose, keeps him all right.

Your Court dinner must have been amusing.

I think I shall manage to be in town on the 17th or 18th. Alfred Rothschild gives me a suite of independent rooms in Seamore Place—and everything else that I want—and, as far as he is concerned, leaves me quite alone. After the party meeting and the Address I shall get back here again. Perhaps, then, you will remember your luncheon.

Yours ever,

B

Hughenden Manor,
May 14th, 1880

Your letters keep me alive. Lord Rowton just returned. I was glad to see he was introduced to House of Lords by a Shropshire peer.

It is hot here, but a fatal blast all the same and I suffer much from my enemy. I have a terrible week before me. On Monday we go to Windsor "dine and sleep," and on the following day I have a sort of council in Seamore Place. Then on Wednesday, Bridgewater House; a fine occasion for an asthmatic Demosthenes.

The only consolation I have is to remember that William 3rd was a victim like myself; but then he had only to counsel and fight and not to talk. And I have heard my father say that his friend, the great Kemble (John), used to enchant the world with his Coriolanus and when he came behind the scenes, fell into the arms of men who carried him to a sofa where he panted like a hippopotamus for an hour.

I tried to write yesterday, but could not spell and feel now half idiotic.

Yours ever,

B

On May 17th he was summoned to Windsor again:

May 19th, 1880

A fine meeting in a palace worthy of one. I was in hopes to have been able to have called on you afterwards; but the affair was later and longer than I had expected and I was exhausted, though I hope I did not show it.

Now I am going to the dinner, with the speech just received from the A.V.;[2] 'tis dull and mischievous, but won't set the Thames on fire.

The Windsor visit was agreeable and the two young Princesses of Hesse charming; intelligent, highly bred and very good-looking; the second truly handsome. I sate next to the Queen who was bright and said—"I feel so happy that I think what has occurred is only a horrid dream!"

I believe they will not be content without my head, as Stafford said.

Yours ever,

B

To Lady Chesterfield

Hughenden Manor,
June 2nd, 1880

Your presents, dear Darling, are so numerous and so agreeable that I cannot keep time with your kindness;

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[2] The Arch-villain, i.e. Gladstone.

thank you enough for them; or seem in my hurried lines sufficiently to appreciate them.

Last Thursday Newport and his brother Francis came down here for a day's fishing in my water, and did well. Newport bagged nine trout and one two-pounder—I sent him up to town with all of them and they were to be divided between Selina and Ida.

These two ladies came down and lunched here yesterday; but the day was not one of brilliant sunshine as awaited Newport, for the rain came at last. Hitherto it has rained in every parish except this.

I go up to town to-morrow for the 2nd reading of the Burials Bill in the Lords. I think it an odious Bill and cannot see, on the grounds the concession is to be made, why the Dissenters should not have their share of the Churches as well as their yards. I shall oppose it, but with little hope since I understand the two Archbishops and half the Bench vote for it! This feebleness and false conciliation gain neither regard, nor respect.

The venison was fat and fine. The flowers yesterday arrived after the ladies had departed. It was a pity.

Yours,

B

Hughenden Manor,
June 6th, 1880

I went up to town on Thursday for the Debate, but departed next morning by the earliest train. I think the measure very unjust and very impolitic, and will be a precedent for much mischief; but it is useless to attempt fighting the battle of the Church with both Archbishops against you and half the reverend Bench! It is a mockery.

The roses arrived all right. The light pink one was sweet, but could not retain its perfume like the deep crimson one which was quite fragrant last night.

The Sun did not shine on Ida's visit, and I was sorry. However they seemed pretty well amused.

Digby has just come into Parliament; he is very young, 24 or so; in the Guards. I don't know him, but Monty does; but then Monty is at Berlin and perhaps at St. Petersburg. I fancy I have heard him speak well of him.

My oak and my ash came out this year exactly at the same time, and in the same degree. What does that portend?

Adieu.

Yours,

B

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
June 8th, 1880

The "rigmarole" was delightful. I can't have too much of it; only I can't return even rigmarole. When I am in solitude, and mine is complete for I have not interchanged a word with a human being since we parted, I get absorbed in studies and pursuits which render letter-writing almost impossible to me—quite impossible except to you.

I have heard nothing of Monty and, for aught I know, he may be at St. Petersburg. He was due to-day at the Connaughts' and looked forward, I think, to that Ascot visit with anticipated gratification. I am sure he would be there if he could.

My lady of the Isle presented me yesterday with four cygnets. There are half a dozen peacocks now basking at full length on the lawn; motionless. I prefer them in these attitudes to their flourishing their unfurled fan-like tails. They are silent as well as motionless and that's something. In the morning they strut about and scream, and make love or war.

All my hopes are on Chippendale.[3]

Yours ever,

B

Hughenden Manor,
June 11th, 1880

Your letter was delightful; what they call graphic. I am glad I have been to Ascot to have royally lunched and lounged on lawn; as I see it all in your bright page to the very life.

All my household were on Bradford's stable and I believe well backed their opinion. The coachman on these matters is the great authority, greater even than Baum. He has backed the stable systematically for some time. At first, to use his lingo, because he thought it "respectable to Lord B.," as a friend of his Lord's; but for the last year from the conviction that Lord B.'s stable had at length got right. I fear, however, he has been hit on the cup. We could have beaten anything but Isonomy.[4]

Your

B

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[3] Lord Bradford's race-horse.

[4] The famous race-horse of that name.

To Lady Chesterfield

Hughenden Manor,
June 11th, 1880

Yes, I am here and shall remain here. I have been in this country now sixty years and I was its member for thirty, and yet I never saw my lands and home in May and June—I might add July. They are too delightful and I cannot live without cuckoos and nightingales and pink May.

I go up to town on Tuesday to vote for Lord Salisbury on Burials Bill, but I shall return by the earliest train the next morn.

Chippendale is evidently a great horse; if he had beaten Isonomy we should all have agreed, the greatest. And he nearly did! I am very glad our dear friends have a little luck in these dark times.

Yours ever,

B

Lady Bradford asked him what he thought of the Budget? And he replied on June 14th—"I don't think it a Conservative Budget. It is another attempt to divert and separate the farmers from the gentlemen—and will be successful. I think the Game Bill with this view much the most devilish of the A. V.'s scheme. In time the farmers will find out that repeal of Malt tax will do them no good; but they will stick to the Hares, and Rabbits, and there will be a chronic cause of warfare." But he saw that it would be a grave tactical error if the House of Lords were to throw out the Bill, and in the end he persuaded them not to do so. In a letter to Lady Bradford on June 16th, he explained why he went backwards and forwards between Hughenden and London when his presence was required in the House of Lords:

> I shall be in town to-morrow for the usual reason—an anticipated division in the House of Lords. And I shall leave town early the next day. After ruling England for six years, I can't bring myself to retire into lodgings, or worse, take refuge in a hotel. Dante has celebrated how agreeable it is to live with a friend. But mine are very kind; only nothing is more conducive to discomfort when you are of a solitary temperament, than the devotion of those who never will understand that all you desire is to be left alone.

He took advantage of his visits to London to see as much as possible of Lady Bradford. "I shall call on you to-morrow at six o'clock and hope to find you disengaged and well," he wrote on June 23rd. "I shall probably have to stay for Friday, and in that case I could call on you on Friday morning, and we might have a walk."

That the Queen maintained close and friendly relations with him is clear from a postscript to the same letter—"Telegrams from the Queen; 'Safely arrived at nine. All well, splendid weather in Scotland but intensely hot. Hope you are well.'" On June 25th he wrote two concise but expressive lines—"Fierce gout in my right hand and the other queer. Found Baum seriously ill." On the 27th he wrote at greater length to Lady Chesterfield:

Hughenden Manor,
June 27th, 1880

Your letter reached me in London yesterday morning where I had been for two or three days in consequence, chiefly, of the present confusion of affairs. Nothing will come of it, for no Ministry is knocked up in its first Session however foolish it may be. I am writing with a gouty hand, but I hope you will be able to decypher this.

Bradlaugh makes the most noise, but the Irish Eviction Bill is much the most serious thing.

I saw Selina who seems on the point of flitting. Rather early this in the season which, I am told, is a busy one though brief. If the Eviction Act passes, there will not be many more seasons. It is a revolutionary age and the chances are, that even you and I may live to see the final extinction of the great London Season, which was the wonder and admiration of our youth.

Weather here consists of frequent thunder storms and of great length. At every crack all the peacocks scream. I hardly know which sound is the most infernal. The mixture quite a day of judgment.

Thank you 1,000 times for nectarines.

Yours ever,

B

Early in July he wrote that his hand was getting better—"but my left foot, long menacing, is now attacked. They say there is a compensation in all distresses; and mine is that my asthma, from which I have suffered much of late, disappeared with the advent of gout." He thought the

Irish Land Bill one of the most dangerous attacks upon property that he had known. But he was convinced that it would be much wiser to allow the Whigs—if they could be persuaded to do it—to head the revolt against the Government rather than for the Tories to lead the attack themselves:

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
July 4th, 1880

Freedom from asthma consoles and compensates for all other suffering; but though I have left off my sling to-day, I am obliged to indite this in a Shetland glove.

Mr. Baum will make his appearance to-morrow and resume his duties. I have not seen him, for I hate that sort of thing; but Monty, who was here an hour or two, was so kind as to supply my deficiency.

I have no faith whatever in the Whig defection on the Land Bill—the most dangerous thing that has happened in my time—now, a long experience. The Fenian members will, by their numbers, compensate the A.V. for the Whig defection. The Whigs may be indignant, but they are pusillanimous. There is no one in the Cabinet equal to the emergency, or qualified for it. Spencer is weaker than water; Granville has not an acre; Kimberley not much; Argyll will only kick for Scotland; Westminster a creature of the A.V. and I fear we know the length of Hartington's foot.

Alas! Alas!

B

Hughenden Manor,
July 7th, 1880

Monty came down this morning on business and returned by four o'clock train. I have a moment to write to you.

I don't expect to go to Windsor, and it is just as well that I should not. I was alarmed to hear from Monty that there is a garden party at Marlboro' House on Tuesday which the Faery honors, and that I am invited. I shall, however, endeavor to avoid it. Fallen Ministers are not company for Princesses and Princes who, very wisely, favor popularity and power.

I really think the country is going to the Devil; but I have resolved to oppose the Land Bill in the House of Lords on its principle, and we must be fools and cowards if we do not win. So Bradford, and no one, must go away. I am trying not to make it a mere party move, but an effort to keep property still sacred. The Duke of Somerset will oppose the Bill, and if he would move its rejection I think we should be safe. They tell me Alington is a great trimmer. I shall appeal personally to every peer who owes his creation to the late Ministry.

Ever yours,

B

He wrote in a similar strain to Lady Chesterfield:

July 7th, 1880

. . . As for public affairs so far as I, who am a hermit, can judge them, they appear disgraceful. Nothing can be more rash and unwise than Gladstone's whole course; but they all give in to him, and whatever Hartington may murmur at the Turf Club, he not only supports Gladstone in all his pranks, but speaks for him and in no doubtful tones. The value of all property is affected by the public opinions now encouraged in high places. Property is no longer what it used to be in public opinion —sacred.

And he returned to the subject in his letter to Lady Bradford on July 12th:

Hughenden Manor,
July 12th, 1880

Sir Stafford came down here yesterday evening, having telegraphed to that effect, to consult about affairs which are most critical. It seems that Gladstone meant really to have resigned, had he been beaten on the Irish Land Bill the other night. Our people, however, are too eager. Any suspicion that we are acting with an understanding with the Home Rulers, however unfounded, would alienate some of our friends. Then again the Whigs must be treated with consideration. They must be allowed to feel that they are leading parliamentary opinion, not that they are drawing chestnuts from the fire for the Tories. It is the first time that the Whigs have been really frightened since 1834. Funny, but they really say that Derby is to speak against the Bill if it reaches the Lords! . . .

Yours ever,

B

On July 15th, Lord Beaconsfield was again summoned to Windsor, "to dine and sleep." He would have preferred not to have gone, but realised that to decline would be impossible. And the occasion proved pleasant enough. "The visit to Windsor was most interesting and agreeable," he told Lady Bradford on the 18th. "I went early and saw a great deal of my late and gracious Mistress. She looked ten years younger and, as you say, quite pretty. She confessed she was perfectly well." In the meantime the plight of the farmers already sufficiently deplorable, was rendered worse by the vagaries of the summer weather. And Beaconsfield painted a lurid picture for the edification of Lady Chesterfield:

> July 18th, 1880
>
> . . . Here everything is dark. A series of storms has destroyed all our hopes which were full of promise. A plentiful hay harvest drowned and the finest wheat the farmers have had for years all laid. It is a scene of ravage, of havoc like a conquered country. It is the last drop in the bitter cup which the landed interest will have to swallow. New Zealand wheat of the best quality selling yesterday in Wycombe market at 42*s.*—per quarter—sold by samples and guaranteed to be delivered in August! . . . As for politics, Gladstone will be as fatal to the aristocracy as the weather; and if he were younger the Crown would not be safe.

Almost on the last day of the month came news of General Burrows' defeat at Kandahar:

1 Seamore Place,
July 30th, 1880

The terrible news from Afghanistan, the defeat of Chippendale,[5] and some other matters so knocked me up yesterday, that I felt physically incapacitated to write.

While Lord Salisbury was sitting with me, before we went down to House of Lords, my host[6] sent in a telegram they had received, which showed, at least, that there was much exaggeration in Primrose's telegram which he ought not to have sent and which Hartington ought not to have read aloud. Why also announce in both Houses that the Citadel of Candahar is not supplied with water! These statements are known in every bazaar of India almost as soon as uttered. No discretion at Head Quarters. I believe myself that this military disaster would never have occurred, had it not been for the rash announcement of Ripon that England was only too anxious to quit Afghanistan. Immediately every chief tried to make his fortune, so that he might be the future Sovereign. The English Government has chosen the wrong man; a tool and pensioner of Russia! This disaster will add to Turkish difficulties and Parliament will be prorogued, if ever it be prorogued, with the Empire in general confusion.

Lord Cairns arrived on Wednesday and called on me at once. He looks well, and seems full of fight. Salisbury also much improved.

We had a council at his house this morning from which I have just returned, and, at a quarter to four, I must be with Gleichen for a torturing hour about this cursed bust.[7]

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[5] At Goodwood.

[6] Mr. Alfred de Rothschild.

Janetta asked me to dinner to-day to meet Salisbury. Fortunately I had already declined Barrington. These dinners don't suit me. I am suffering from "mine old familiar foe" asthma, not very agreeable with a great debate before me.

Yours ever,

B

Early in August the Government were defeated in the House of Lords, where the Irish Land Bill was rejected at the end of a two days' debate:

To Lady Bradford

1 Seamore Place,
August 4th, 1880

A hurried line before I leave for Hughenden. I have been so extremely engaged the last few days that I have been unable to write anything.

Last night, after a great debate of two days, an overwhelming majority showed that there was yet something to rally round in this country, though we have trying times before us.

The speech of Lord Cairns was overwhelming and one of the most extraordinary performances of sustained power in rhetoric that I ever listened to. Though nearly 3 hours it was not too long, as it was our complete case for the country; not a point omitted.

---

[7] A bust which was being done for the Queen.

The gem of the debate was Lord Lansdowne's speech the first night, which only proved how very deficient Gladstone is in his perception of character and knowledge of human nature—in not placing Lansdowne in the Cabinet and offering him a subordinate office which he nearly declined.[8] However, he has now taken his position as the alert man of the Whig party—the most important, I should say, because besides ability one must look to his other great qualities, his rank, above all his name, and even superior to that —his youth.

I did not speak at all to my own satisfaction, which I rarely do—but considering I had a bad asthma and it was two o'clock in ye morn, I must be content. . . .

I know nothing about Gladstone's real state, as none of the gossip of society on such a subject can be relied on; rumors, good or bad, are circulated for an object under such circumstances. I hope you may make out this scribble—but I am very infirm and have had scant sleep. A letter from Lytton from Malta, from which I infer he may be expected here daily.

Adieu! Adieu!

B

Early in August Lord Lytton reached England on his return from India. "Lord Lytton has written to see me and he comes down here to-morrow," he told Lady Chesterfield on August 10th. "I fear Indian affairs are very bad." The prospect of the visit weighed somewhat on Beaconsfield's mind, for on the morning of the visit he wrote—"Lytton comes to-day; he made the request in such a manner that it was impossible to evade the visit; but I had hoped it might have taken place while I was at Seamore Place." However the visit was successfully carried through:

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[8] Lord Lansdowne had already resigned from the Ministry.

August 15th, 1880

I think the visit of the Lyttons went off pretty well. I did not much like the prospect of it; but Monty helped me much. I did not fall in love with the Lady, but I should think her aide-de-camps have done enough in that respect. She rules her husband but that I suppose is always the case where marriages are what is called happy.

With the Session extending through August and possibly into September, Beaconsfield became anxious lest revolutionary Government measures should become law from pure lack of opposition:

To Lady Chesterfield

Hughenden Manor,
August 10th, 1880

You seem to enjoy Blenheim—and that is not wonderful. It is stately and the park of Oaks, vast and worthy of the Druids. When I was there last I saw the gems, and now they are sold. And I wandered in the great Library and, now, that is to be sold. Alas! Ichabod! I hope the pictures at least will be spared.

Lord Aveland came down yesterday morning to consult me about "Hares and Rabbits" and returned after luncheon. I fear the Session will enter into September and that the

Government will pass all their abominable measures from no Opposition being present. All my colleagues are scattered and will not appear again; though I shall go up to town and vote against the various iniquities. . . .

Adieu!

B

This danger became so great that Beaconsfield decided towards the end of August to take vigorous action to counteract it:

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
August 20th, 1880

I go up to London on Monday to take the command of the troops. It was necessary as the greatest dissatisfaction was expressed by our friends in both Houses, at our front bench in the House of Lords being deserted, and that in the House of Commons feebly attended. Stanley and John Manners seemed to have run away. Discontent very general, and when such a supporter as the Duke of Buccleugh protests against the absence of all who should counsel and lead them, it is time to look to our P's and Q's if we seriously intend to keep the party together. There is some reason in my being absent for I have no roof of my own in town, but that is not the case of Cairns, Duke of Richmond and Lord Cranbrook, who sneaked off without saying a word. I have summoned them back and they swear, at least the first two, most horridly; but they must eat the leek. Cranbrook behaves better and will be up on Monday. I have ordered a stout Whip to be sent everywhere.

I don't see why you think "it will not last." So long as Hartington remains, and he gets deeper in with them every day, the Whigs will never move with effect; in fact, they can't, they are not strong enough.

Yours ever,

B

"Should not be surprised" if they gave the Garter to Derby.

Carlton Club,
8 o'clock, August 25th, 1880

I did not come up till Tuesday, the House of Lords having unexpectedly adjourned till that day. Yesterday and to-day pressing business. I had a meeting yesterday, and afterwards House of Lords and to-day another meeting of bewildered Peers. It will be difficult to steer them through all their difficulties.

To-day I had my late colleagues Duke of Buccleugh, Bradford, Aveland, Carnarvon! The latter will surprise you. It was at his own request. I have the meetings in the golden rooms, which are now my sole possession. I went this morning to the House of Commons and saw Mr. Chamberlain and the other new lights; Mundella who looked like an old goat on Mount Haemus and other dreadful beings.

I just saw Cis who looks well enough, though he complains. I fear I may be kept here a week; too dreadful! Without a resource.

I have no news and Bradford will probably write it all to you. I am very tired, having walked too much and too far with Arthur Balfour for my equerry, who piloted me to the

House of Commons. I am too wearied and too pressed for time to write to anyone except you.

Your.

B

To Lady Chesterfield

August 28th, 1880

I could as soon go to the Moon as to Bretby or Hughenden. We are in the heat of the parliamentary campaign, and I very much fear that the Peers may perpetrate a great folly and throw out the Game Bill, and so entirely lose the only classes on which we once thought we could rely—the landed interest in all its divisions. It is very hot and I am tired to death, and not foreseeing all these troubles and difficulties I have got to sit in an hour to Count Gleichen to finish my bust.

Yours ever,

B

The labour told upon Beaconsfield's health, and he returned to Hughenden badly shaken:

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
September 3rd, 1880

I came down here on Wednesday afternoon and am prostrate with asthma; the consequences of a week of spouting. Not that the public jabber was so much the cause for that, though frequent, was brief; but the constant and lengthened homilies of private discussion did the mischief and strained my feeble instrument beyond its power.

Monty has gone to Taymouth and will be long absent; enquiries already about his habitat from Balmoral, and I should not be surprised if he was commanded to pay a visit there, which I should think must annoy the Ministers.

I fear that Lady Chesterfield's fall must have been very severe.

I can't write any more and am inclined to tear up this scrawl; it is disgraceful. There must be things to tell you, but my mind is a blank.

Yours,

B

CHAPTER XVIII

September–December 1880

ENDYMION PUBLISHED

On his return to Hughenden at the beginning of September, Beaconsfield settled down to a quiet and solitary existence. The Session over, he looked on with a certain measure of detachment at events as they occurred; but his conviction that Gladstone was bringing the country to ruin served to increase the detestation in which he held him. He thought that affairs in Afghanistan were being badly handled:

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
September 6th, 1880

I am most grateful to you for your letters, but I have nothing to say in reply. Here I am in perfect solitude; I hate driving and I can't walk until I get rid of my asthmatic demon.

Roberts is a first-rate man as I always believed. I understand it was quite on the cards that he was not dismissed by the new administration; they instantly put Stewart over him and contemplated, I am told, his supersession in due course.

Lady Chesterfield seems to have wonderfully escaped.

I have sent her some young grouse to-day. Often I am asked now, "Shall I send you some grouse? Will they be welcome?"

"Certainly," I invariably reply, "if young."

In future I mean to return the old crows; the only way to stop these impudent gifts.

I am ashamed to send this scrawl—but I can do no better.

Yours ever,

B

The march was the March of Xenophon, and the victory that of Alexander.[1]

September 10th, 1880

. . . I don't give my mind at all to politics, but it seems to me that the A.V. has carried everything before him and has completely detached from us our old allies, the farmers. The clergy he had corrupted before. We have been so unlucky that I think we ought to take the hint that Providence has given us. A ruler of England who has to encounter six bad harvests ought to retire from public life, if only on the plea of being *infelix*—the worst of epithets.

"Thank God I am not at the St. Leger," he exclaimed in a letter to Lady Chesterfield on September 14th. "Silence and solitude suit me. . . . I understand that amiable being the Prime Minister means to finish off the country gentlemen next year. The race is to be extinct by the time of the dissolution." And in a letter to the same correspondent on the 17th, he spoke of the ill effects which his own labours in London had had upon his health:

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[1] A reference to Roberts's march from Kabul to Kandahar.

Hughenden Manor,
September 17th, 1880

I have nothing to say about myself. I was very well, for me, when I went to town for the ten days' campaign; but my asthma came back there and I have never got rid of it. I had so much to do, my two chief Captains Cairns and Salisbury being away, and my whip Lord Lathom at Homburg! that I had to see so many persons, hold so many meetings and give so many interviews, that I talked myself hoarse in the ungracious office of persuading the Peers to do that which they did not like. It is not a pleasant office and I am trying to get free from it. When do the Bradfords go? And *where* are they going to? Not Algiers I hope, as your letter would seem to imply? I don't like your account of yourself and fear you must have had a severe fall. Very provoking!

My farmers have ingathered an exuberant harvest, for which they say they cannot get a paying price. The rain suits them, as they abound in turnips and other roots.

Yours ever,

B

He was successful in persuading Lady Bradford to promise him a visit early in October:

Hughenden Manor,
September 17th, 1880

Your letter has just reached me, but too late to write to Yorkshire.

I was of course sorry, but I was also disappointed about the horse, as I felt confident Gladstone's Duke would be defeated and I read good accounts of Zealot.[2]

I shall expect you on the 8th of next month; but if you find me alone you must not be surprised, as I am a hermit and in communication with no one, trusting in these matters always to Monty who, at this time of year, is always away.

You ask me about reading and new books, and reproach me rather for not recommending some. I never read, and scarcely see, a new book. All these new crotchety Reviews I am obliged to see, to catch, not the Cynthia, but the nonsense of the minute, of which the leader of a party must be master; and when they are exhausted I take refuge in my classics and try to restore the tone of the mind.

Yours ever,

B

Hughenden Manor,
September 24th, 1880

You are most kind in writing, and to one who can make no return. I often ask myself, is it better not to write than to send this barrenness? These lines show my decision, but I believe I have decided wrongly.

You know much more about politics than I do. I never give them a thought, as I can no longer in the slightest degree influence affairs. Our wise rulers seem about plunging us into war. There is nobody—there is nothing—to prevent them.

About our meeting, which every day gets nearer. There must be somebody asked, or Bradford will be bored to death. I have not succeeded in enlisting any woman yet, worthy of the occasion. We must take refuge in one or two tolerably amusing men.

---

[2] One of Lord Bradford's horses.

Yours ever,

B

Developments in the Near East aroused grave apprehensions in his mind:

To Lady Chesterfield

Hughenden Manor,
September 26th, 1880

I hope you are improving, and even rapidly. Your letters show no diminution of vigor.

I have not been generally a pessimist, but am by nature somewhat too sanguine. I confess, however, that I feel evil times are falling on this land. I heard yesterday, from a high quarter, that to-morrow the Great Powers, with the exception of France who withdraws from the Concert, will bombard Dulcigno! A sheer act of madness and more calculated eventually to bring about a general war than any piece of mischief that could be devised.

Ever yours,

B

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
September 29th, 1880

I was just beginning to write to you yesterday, though I had nothing to say, when the Duke of Somerset arrived. He is very fond of driving about from Bulstrode and was once much in the habit of paying these morning visits here, but they ceased when I became Minister. He is a lettered man and otherwise clever, but he has got deaf since earlier visits, and I find that a good ear is almost as important as information and abilities.

I was much amused with "Conny's" adventure; very characteristic. I thought also that it was rather humorous, that Boatswain Smith & Co.[3] had sailed his yacht into the harbor of Dulcigno and will be a good eye-witness, when Parliament reassembles, of all their blundering and hesitation. I think the A.V. so wicked a man, that he would not hesitate to plunge us into a great war to soothe and save his maniacal vanity.

What you tell me about Monty is news to me. I have heard nothing of, or from, him which surprises me. I never bore him to write, for I know he is greatly taxed with domestic, daily correspondence; but I like to know where he is which I certainly don't at the moment. The Duke seemed much to enjoy the scrapes of the A.V., but I fear that he is so unscrupulous a character and is surrounded by such second-rate men, that great public mischief may occur. Fairies tell me things are *very grave.*

Yours ever,

B

To Lady Chesterfield

Hughenden Manor,
October 4th, 1880

It gave me, my dear, great pleasure to hear that you had been out; but I am not surprised at your feeling a little weak.

---

[3] A reference, apparently, to W. H. Smith, who had succeeded Ward Hunt in 1877 as First Lord of the Admiralty in Beaconsfield's Government.

Political affairs seem to get more serious every day; but you know just as much about them as I do—rather more, for I try to forget them. When a man has governed a country for six years and had six bad harvests, it is such a combination of bad fortune that I think he is too unlucky a person to trouble himself about public affairs, though had I remained in office I think all Turkish and Afghan trouble would have been terminated by this time.

The Bradfords are coming here on Friday before they go abroad, and probably will never return. What can all this mean? They don't say even where they are going to. I think he ought to remember he is Lord Lieutenant of Shropshire. As for their affairs, I can't make head or tail of them. A profound mystery.

The pears are delicious.

Yours ever,

B

Before the arrival of his small party of guests, Disraeli was attacked by asthma and gout—a most untoward occurrence:

To Lady Chesterfield

Hughenden Manor,
October 10th, 1880

My dearest friend,

I am hardly capable of writing a line, for last Monday, having the day before been quite well, I was fiercely and suddenly attacked by my old enemy, the Asthma, and am really prostrate with, yesterday, incipient gout which, though it adds to my sufferings, may eventually prove my friend. It is very unfortunate that this should happen on the only time this year I have asked a few friends to Hughenden; but I should not have done so had I not been led to believe that the Bradfords were about to leave England, and for an indefinite period.

This going abroad, however, seems quite a myth and, between ourselves, I shall not be surprised if the whole scheme vanishes, unless the young ladies, who have never travelled, tease their parents into an adventure never seriously contemplated by the seniors.

I have seen, therefore, little of Selina during this visit, though I hope she has been amused as there were several agreeable men, Lytton, Landon, and others, and yesterday arrived the great Monty, the favorite of Courts and Queens, and whom Her Majesty invited to dinner the same day as she did Hartington!

Yours ever, hoping you progress,

B

Grateful for the grapes.

The attack was one of the most severe that Beaconsfield had experienced; and it was not until October 22nd, that he was able to pick up his pen again and write a shaky line to Lady Bradford:

Hughenden Manor,
October 22nd, 1880

A few, feeble words—my first—to tell you I have left my room this morning and am shaven and shorn and dressed and sofaed in my writing room, after a terrible ten days or more. My right leg is yet bound up and I dare not have recourse to any tonics while the enemy still lingers, or it would probably flare up again like the asthmatic powders when all seems extinguished.

Leopold has asked me to Claremont on the 28th to 3rd November. Monty, of course, invited and goes. As it was impossible for Mr. Baum to telegraph to a Prince of the blood we had some difficulty in replying, but it got done. . . .

Yours ever,

B

Hughenden Manor,
October 26th, 1880

I hope your horse will win and I wish the others had been successful. This is almost all I can say, for it is an immense effort for me to write.

I have not seen Monty since you were here. I take it he is in Dorsetshire, and in a few days he goes to Claremont —then to Sandringham—*for a week*—and he has doubtless other engagements. It would be dull work for him to be here and lose so much life and pleasure. It would distress me.

I have been wearing your muffettees—crimson—for some days. I never read the articles in the *Times* which is the only paper I see; but I read the trials, etc., so that I may know when any of my friends lose or regain their characters.

I am not a political pessimist, but I think I never knew the country in a worse state. There is only one thing in a worse, and that is the Tory party.

Yours ever,

B

To Lady Chesterfield

Hughenden Manor,
October 29th, 1880

I sate in the sun one day; it was last Sunday—unfortunately only one day, for I have not yet the use of my feet which were the last and the most severely attacked of all my members. Last Sunday here was like a day at Naples or in Egypt. Soft, resplendent, cloudless; but since then we have had nothing but storms.

Mr. Baum has gone up to town to-day to meet Lord Rowton and see a house for me. I don't like to take a house without seeing it first myself, but move I can't and so I have no option. Monty is too much engaged to come here where he would only lose his time, and distress me by my depriving him of his pleasures. This afternoon he was to have gone to Claremont where I was asked to meet him and others, and after that he goes for a week to Sandringham; but I hear his sister is very unwell and the Doctors say she must go directly to Biarritz—and he must take her. He is a devoted brother and would sacrifice for her even a visit to Prince Hal, but sisters should marry and not require such sacrifices, which disturb the business of life and the social arrangements which are the most important portion of that life.

My asthma has disappeared which is a great compensation.

Yours ever,

B

The loan of a book provided Beaconsfield with an excuse for setting forth his views on the merits or otherwise of translations:

To Lady Chesterfield

Hughenden Manor,
November 2nd, 1880

I will take care of Carnarvon's book and return it, which generally I never do and that is the reason why I tell everyone never to lend me books. I have just found one Dorothy lent me a year ago and shall send it to her. Is she in Town?

Carnarvon's book is scholarly as all he writes. But Homer in blank verse, notwithstanding Lord Derby, I never could abide. I don't think any poetry is translatable:[4] some prose, even better than the original.

If there were any metre, which would suit Homer, I think it would be the *ottava rima*. And I almost believe that Ariosto might have translated the Odyssey. But as a rule, translations of poetry are impossible: whether Homer or Horace.

What are the Bradfords really going to do? And what is Malmesbury about!!!

Yours ever,

B

Lord Mayor's Day, the occasion in the past of so many rhetorical triumphs, found Beaconsfield still a helpless invalid:

---

[4] Yet when this was written, Edward FitzGerald's English version of the *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyám had been available for twenty years.

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
Lord Mayor's Day, 1880

I could not write to you yesterday as I had wished, for though the pen was in my hand it was fruitless. I could say nothing except about my health, which is not very interesting to you or myself. This is now the 5th week of my imprisonment, for though I am carried downstairs to sit in the sun that is all I can manage, for I cannot use my legs. But the freedom from asthma is so vast a relief that I scarcely grudge the sort of coma into which my life has fallen. I have never had a fit of gout like it. It has attacked me with renovating ferocity. It reminds me of poor Lord Derby. My hands are now pretty free; but the gout is in my face, etc.

I always knew you would not go abroad, and I always knew you would go to Bournemouth. Do you visit London first, and when?

I have done nothing about a house for though I have half a dozen offered to me, I won't take one on the opinion of a 3rd person. If my legs get right I shall instantly go up to town to see them. . . .

Yours ever,

B

Not until the middle of November was he able to struggle up to London, and then only to see a doctor:

1 Seamore Place,
November 15th, 1880

I am here rather unexpectedly; but many things combined to call me—among them, to see my M.D. If he continued his visits to Hughenden I should have to execute a mortgage on my estate; if indeed land be any longer a security.

I sent a telegram to Bradford this morning to know your movements, which I could not learn at Belgrave Square. Are you coming up this week? So newspapers say, but they generally lie. I should be sorry to leave town the day you arrive.

I am hardly on my legs yet except in a room—and the fogs, which are dreadful, would not let me walk in the Park which I scarcely can see, though I live in the lane.

Pray telegraph your movements. I should not be surprised if the Faery reached the South on Saturday next or even Friday; a week earlier than intended. I hope it does not mean a meeting of Parliament.

Yours ever,

B

At this juncture when Beaconsfield was sorely in need of the assistance which Monty Corry alone was capable of giving him, that faithful friend was called abroad on what looked like being an extended visit:

To Lady Chesterfield

Hughenden Manor,
November 19th, 1880

I grieve to say that Miss Corry is so unwell that Monty, instead of leaving her at Biarritz, is obliged to take her to winter at Algiers! And I suppose he will remain there. This is a most unfortunate domestic event, as he is attending to much business for me at this moment and forced me to go up to town to settle about a house which I ought not to have done. As regards the fall of the leaf, I found more leaves on the earth in Hyde Park than in Hughenden Park, and I left London in a black fog yesterday, where it is here radiant and balmy.

I hope I have bought Lord Tankerville's house in Curzon Street; but I shall never feel assured with so uncertain a vendor, that it is mine until all is signed and sealed.

I never thanked you for your grapes which are excellent.

I always think it very egotistical and presumptuous for a writer to make gifts of his works to others; but I make an exception in the case of my dearest friends, among which I place you, and therefore Hill Street will receive on Tuesday a work of mine which will not be published for several days after. I know my friends will not think I offer to them these volumes from conceit or arrogance, but from true affection. They will be given to very few. My absence from town prevents my writing your name in them at this moment.

Your dearest friend,

B

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
November 21st, 1880

Your letter was forwarded to me here from Seamore Place which I left on Thursday morning; very glad to get home.

Yesterday I learnt that Tankerville had accepted my offer; so I am settled in that respect for the rest of my life, it being a nine years' lease. I dont think I could have done better particularly as Monty, who undertook to do all this, is away.

A haunch of Balmoral venison to-day informs me the Court leaves Balmoral on Tuesday next.

I am glad you are jealous but alas! in this case there is no cause. Louise did not take me to the play; I took myself. I had been wanting to see "Corsican Brothers" for 20 years and could wait no longer, so I sent to Mitchells and gave £5 5*s*. for a box. I picked up a young gentleman, I doubt not of your acquaintance, to accompany me and prevent my tumbling downstairs, and he figured the next morning in the well-informed *Morning Post* as Lord Rowton! What a harum-scarum business he has made of it. The man who informed him in London that his sister's lungs were all right, sent him to Biarritz for her throat. Kidd told me, who knows all these places as well as complaints, that Biarritz was the very last place she ought to have gone to. And so it turned out. And, now, at Algeria breaking all his engagements! If she had gone to Bournemouth she would probably be well by this time.

Yours ever,

B

He gave his opinion of "Corsican Brothers" and of Irving's performance, in a letter to Lady Bradford on November 26th. But his letter is chiefly notable for the fact that it contains the only mention, apart from the indirect reference in his letter of November 19th to Lady Chesterfield, which occurs in the correspondence, to the work upon which he had been engaged throughout the summer—the completion of his novel *Endymion*:

Hughenden Manor,
November 26th, 1880

Very happy to see your handwriting and hear something of your movements. You see, I had a good nose about the meeting of Parliament. Some of my friends who ought to have known better, believed in it to the last.

I liked the "Corsican Brothers" as a melodrama, and never saw anything put cleverer on the stage. Irving, whom I saw for the first time, is third-rate and never will improve; but good enough for the part he played, though he continually reminded me of Lord Dudley.

"Endymion" is only published to-day, with this remarkable circumstance—the publishers have no copies left; the whole edition—I believe 10,000—having been bespoken. This never happened before. It is published at two o'clock to-day throughout the United States and it is translating, and probably will be finished in a few days, in every European language, Russian included; but, after all, its real fate must depend upon itself. If a failure, the re-action will be as rapid as its progress.

Monty negotiated the whole affair, and I never interfered till he brought Mr. Longman down to Hughenden with a cheque for ten thousand pounds! I confess I accepted it with a scruple, such a sum never having before been given for a work of fiction or, indeed, any other work. I fear it will prove rather the skill of Monty's diplomacy than Mr. Longman's acumen. If so, my conscience will force me to disgorge.

Yours ever,

B

Lady Bradford, it appears, took a hopeful view of the political situation—a good deal to Lord Beaconsfield's surprise:

Hughenden Manor,
November 28th, 1880

Your letters give me much pleasure and I cannot hear from you too often. But why you call this a "tottering Government" I am entirely at a loss to comprehend. It appears to me one of the strongest Ministries we have had, and unhappily—and I speak, I am sure, without prejudice—its strength will be and must be exercised against all those institutions, laws, manners, customs, which we have hitherto revered and tried to cherish.

The Queen has been horribly deceived; she was told, as I believe, that the present arrangement was the only one that would preserve her from the Radicals, guarded, as she would be, by a firm Whig element in the Cabinet. The Whig element dare not say Bo to a goose; much less to Gladstone who certainly is not a goose. He is now really the head of the Radicals, and sets the Whigs at defiance, who will swallow anything if only to conceal their insignificance which resignation would demonstrate.

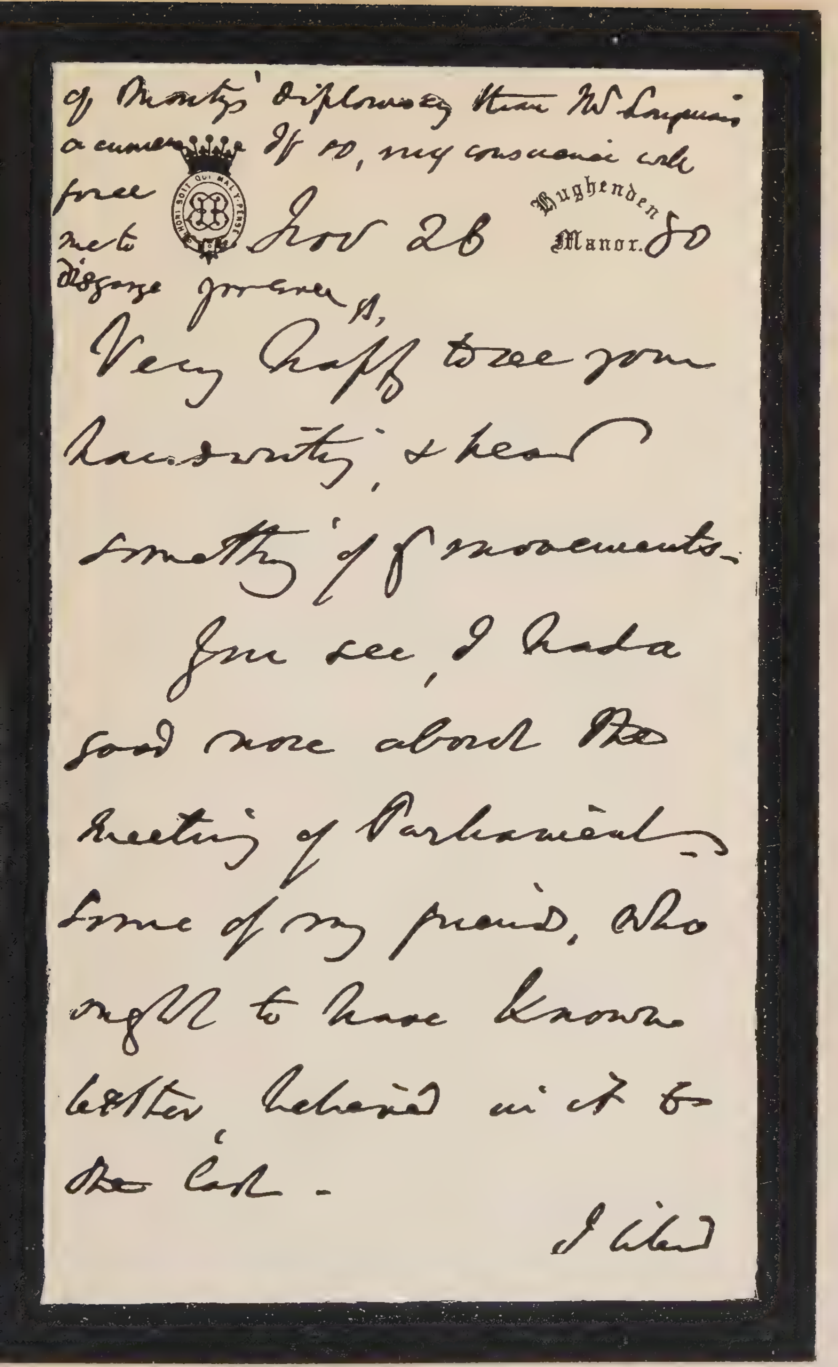
As for the Crown, it is not much better off than the Whigs.

Lytton has sent me a most beautiful coffee service of Cashmere silver (gilt) filigree work. Most beautiful and a great ornament to Hughenden.

I like Bradford's book which I am now reading.

Yours ever,

B



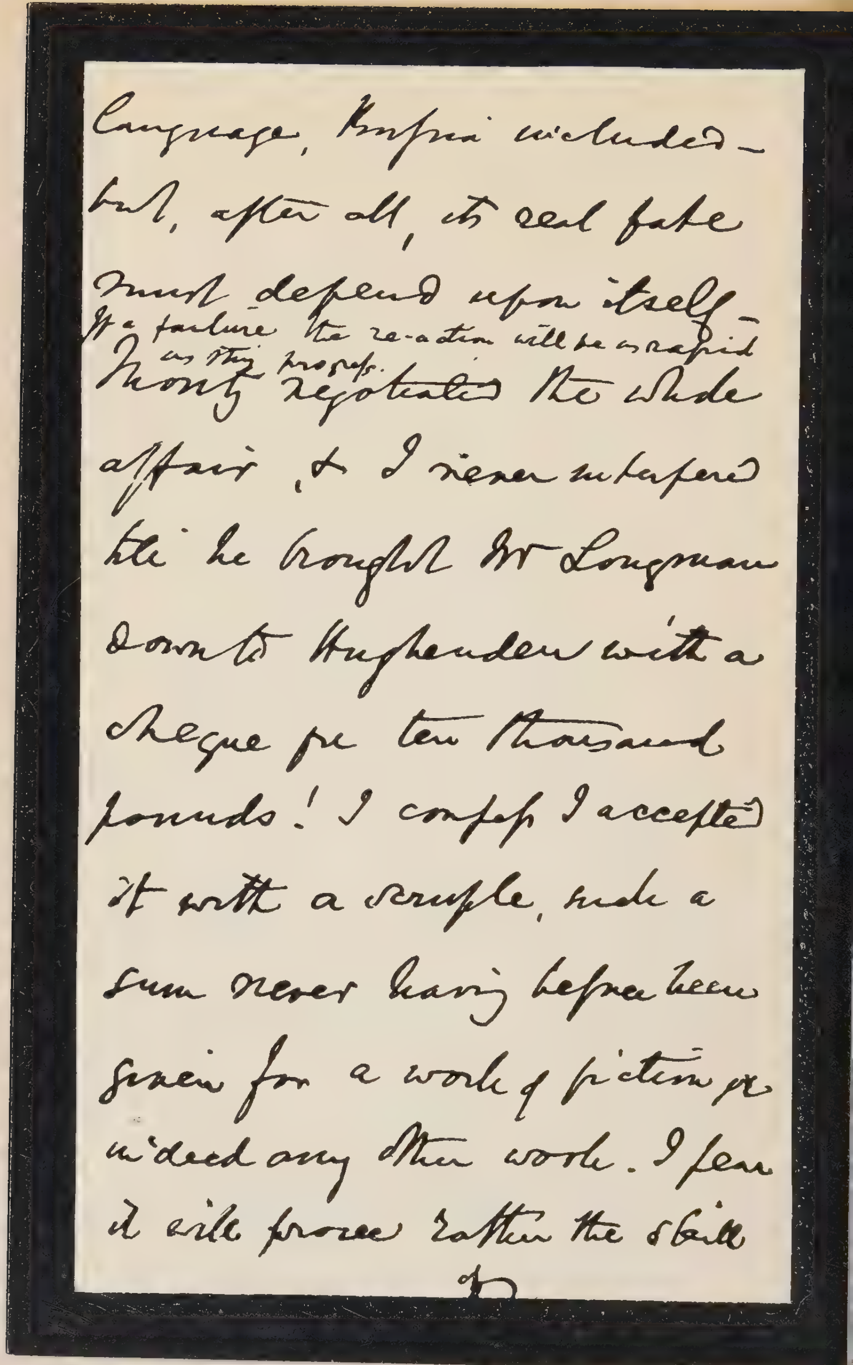
of Monty's diplomacy than Mr Layard's a commission. If so, my conscience will force me to disgorge guineas,

Hughenden Manor.
Nov 26 80

Very happy to see your handwriting, & hear something of yr movements.

You see, I had a good nose about the meeting of Parliament. Some of my friends, who ought to have known better, believed in it to the last.

I liked



language, Prussia included —
but, after all, its real fate
must depend upon itself —
If a failure the re-action will be as rapid
as its progress.
Monty negotiated the whole
affair, & I never interfered
till he brought Mr Longman
down to Hughenden with a
cheque for ten thousand
pounds! I confess I accepted
it with a scruple, such a
sum never having before been
given for a work of fiction or
indeed any other work. I fear
it will prove rather the skill
of

Lady Chesterfield guessed at the original of *Endymion.* Beaconsfield rallied her on her perspicacity—"I never was more surprised than when you told me who was the original of *Endymion.* I thought he was the last person who could have been fixed on." In the same letter he complained of the early date of the meeting of Parliament—"This Epiphany Session very inconvenient and, I think, a little blasphemous. I can't get into my house by the 6th January, and shall have to lie in the streets." It was, perhaps, in this connection that early in December he was summoned to Windsor:

To Lady Chesterfield

Hughenden Manor,
December 7th, 1880

I am going to Windsor to-morrow and shall return here on Friday afternoon. I shall be curious to know what the paragraph about the Prime Minister meant. I hope he is not going to proclaim himself President of the Republic. If he sets up in the Principality, which I believe is quite ready for anything, I think the Prince of Wales should put himself at the head of the Northern folk and reduce him to obedience.

The weather here is delicious. As yet, December has beaten even our soft and sunny November. What fools they are to go to Cowes, and Nice, and Algiers! When they might stay at home with every comfort and with as bland an atmosphere!

This will find you again at Gopsall where you are always pleased. Pray give my kind regards to your host and hostess.

Yours ever,

B

To Lady Bradford

Windsor Castle,
December 10th, 1880

The Lyttons here who are always agreeable, because they are intelligent; and the great hero, Sir Fred. Roberts, a little wiry man not unlike poor Sir John Pakington at a distance, but a more determined countenance when you approach him. Yesterday he departed and there came General Ross, the second in command during the great march; a smaller man even than Sir Frederick, wiry little men who can mount and dismount with rapid ease. Somebody told me, however, that Roberts was so exhausted and unwell that he was obliged to be carried in a litter into Candahar and, having to fight a battle almost directly, he was on horseback during the fray and could only sustain himself in the saddle by the beneficial aid of champagne.

The Christians came yesterday to dinner.

The Queen looks well, and is well, notwithstanding the danger of her realm.

I hear nothing of Monty who is wanted every moment. I go up to town on the 31st Dec. as I have to see many persons, but I fear shall have very little aid in preparing for the 6th.

I received your letter yesterday.

Yours ever,

B

With the meeting of Parliament imminent, Beaconsfield found it impossible to get on without assistance, and was obliged to find a substitute for Monty Corry:

Hughenden Manor,
December 17th, 1880

I was afraid affairs were very bad from a line I received from Ronald Gower, just arrived at Bournemouth, and apparently in a state of consternation at her state and appearance.[5] You have all my sympathy; I wish it could console.

I have heard nothing from Monty and was, therefore, grateful for your line about him, though not a cheerful one. How he could ever have involved himself in such a mess I cannot conceive! The most heedless and hurried thing that ever was done—but it was a mistake that grew out of his heart which is one of much affection, especially for his family.

Affairs are most critical and my labors intolerable. The mere letter writing, etc., too much even for youth. I have written to George Barrington to take Monty's place. He is not a Monty; but he has good talents, great experience of the political world, having been private secretary to Lord Derby, and one too on whose honor and devotion I can rely.

As it is most painful for me to work with artificial light and as I must go out for at least an hour about noon or so, my time is very limited for labors which hourly increase.

With much affection,

Yours,

B

---

[5] The reference was to the Duchess of Westminster.

His remaining letters during the year were concerned chiefly with the political situation:

Hughenden Manor,
December 21st, 1880

I really can write nothing as far as politics are concerned. You know my opinion long ago of affairs, and they have turned out as I predicted. I said in my letter to the Duke of Marlboro', before the General Election, that if the country did not take care something would happen in Ireland "worse even than famine and pestilence." And we have got it.

Our policy has been reversed there as it has been reversed everywhere else, and it seems to me the country is falling to pieces. But the country would have it, and there have been very considerable elections since the Queen's Sovereignty was superseded in Ireland and the Ministry has been sanctioned and supported by immense majorities—in England, Scotland, and Wales!

In a birthday letter I had to-day from my friend, she mentions much the poor Duchess, but says "I will not go into details, for you must have heard all from the Bradfords who, I know, were near her."

Thank Bradford for his map which is exactly what I wanted. We are having a great quarrel smouldering up here about hunting "countries"—all from the folly of that Jackanapes, Charley Carrington.

Yours ever,

B

To Lady Chesterfield

Private

Hughenden Manor,
December 22nd, 1880

I am not a pessimist: rather the reverse, but, I confess, the present state of affairs makes me tremble. Old England seems to be tumbling to pieces. I believe that if Constantinople were occupied by a foreign Power to-morrow, we should not stir a foot. Could we? With Ireland in revolution, S. Africa in rebellion, and the Radicals and Jacobins in England so intent on the destruction of the landed interest which is the backbone of the State, that no one will spare any energies to external dangers and disgraces.

I never thought that in my time it could come to this!

I receive letters every day asking me to write a manifesto and make a speech; that I am the only man who could do so with effect; and all that.

Why should I? I warned the country about Ireland before the General Election and told them to be vigilant, or there would something happen there, "worse even than famine or pestilence." It has happened. And there have been elections since the Irish Revolution in England, Wales and Scotland, and they have supported the policy of imbecility and treason that has brought about all this disaster.

I hope you are well.

Yours ever,

B

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
December 24th, 1880

I am writing by artificial light which does not suit me, though I can read by it still with facility. But if I were in the sunshine, I could have nothing to tell you except that I am very grateful to you for your pretty present, as useful too, as pretty. I am always wearing now habitually the last pair of slippers you gave to me, so you see you clothe me almost cap-à-pie.

Derby's subscription to Boycott and his letter, and Carnarvon's epistolary invective to Bright, are very amusing. What a Nemesis! What must they now think of their deserting their friends for "the great Liberal party," who are the laughing stock of England and the contempt of Europe!

I heard, at last, yesterday from Monty with a too vague promise, if indeed you could call it a promise, of returning for the meeting of Parliament. She seems to have got over her fever and he contemplates her remaining there alone! A queer place for a spinster! Probably a *séjour* at Bournemouth would have cured her.

One who has been staying at Woburn, writes to me that Duke of Bedford passes his time in abusing Gladstone, and said the latter had felt his way to get Derby to join him, but D. would not listen to it and said that nothing should ever induce him to serve under G. I hope things are going on pretty well with you. I leave this for London this day week.

Yours ever,

B

I suppose you see the *Times*. The letter *E.P.B.* is Bouverie, the Whig stormy petrel.

CHAPTER XIX

January–April 1881

LAST DAYS

Lord Beaconsfield's new house in Curzon Street was not quite ready for him when he went up to London for the "Epiphany Session," and he took advantage once more of the generosity of Mr. Alfred de Rothschild and repaired to Number 1 Seamore Place. "I came here on Friday indisposed," he told Lady Chesterfield on January 6th, "and have since been very unwell, so that I have scarcely left my room. I hope to be in my place to-day; but am very weak and fear breaking down from physical imbecility." He managed his speech on the Address, though with difficulty:

To Lady Bradford

1 Seamore Place,
January 8th, 1881

You are most kind in writing to a stupid correspondent. I am glad you were not displeased with what I said in House of Lords, but I had much to say which I was physically unable to express—and had to leave the house. I had been suffering from my great enemy for a week, and though relieved from it the remedies had terribly weakened me.

Northcote spoke well in the House of Commons with unusual fire and vigor, and Gibson[1] last night, I am told, admirably, though he spoke too late for the papers to echo the effect he produced; there having been the first of the obstructive tactics which cost two precious hours at the beginning of the evening.

I have seen Bradford who lunched with me.

I know Canford. It is a fine estate, but the house gloomy and the grounds about without charm. That cannot be said of Cornelia.[2]

I send this to Crichel where I gather you are staying.

I have not yet seen Lady Chesterfield, but hope to have that pleasure this afternoon.

Yours ever,

B

His house—Number 19 Curzon Street—was now ready for him, and on January 10th he wrote for the first time from his new address. He had seen Lady Chesterfield, he said, "she seemed well and unchanged, though Dorothy said she was unwell yesterday at church." He added that he was very nervous about "Lytton's debut in the House of Lords, on Candahar, etc." His nervousness was unnecessary:

19 Curzon Street,
January 12th, 1881

Lytton made a great success on Monday, and at once mounted into the first class of present parliamentary speakers. He had been so traduced and so depreciated by the

---

[1] Afterwards Lord Ashbourne.

[2] Lady Cornelia Guest.

Government and Co.; they had circulated so many ill-natured stories about his preparations and certain and ludicrous failure that his triumph was proportionately increased. Now he is master and can give, on any occasion, even his bitter opponent the Duke of Argyll, much more than he receives.

It is a white world here and deep. I dine at Louise's to-day; also Monty, but feel very sleepy. Harty-Tarty, they say, made a very effective speech last night. Hitherto we have done well in the debate, but chiefly owing to two Irishmen, Gibson and Plunkett; the former, they say, quite excellent. But I wish Northcote would bring forward a little more his young English members; Stanhope and G. Hamilton for example.

I am glad you are moving about, which will amuse you, even Cadland[8] as I hope to hear.

Yours ever,

B

On January 17th, he wrote that he had called several times on Lady Chesterfield, and that he had been to a party given by the Duchess of Manchester—"Louise's was amusing. I asked Hartington 'how the miscreants were?' which seemed not to displease him." Though Alfred de Rothschild was "the best and kindest host in the world," he was glad to escape to his own house, since marriage festivities were in full swing and he felt that he would have been in the way. However, he dined with his erstwhile host "at a great banquet, and sate by Lady Dudley whom

---

[8] Mr. Edgar Drummond's seat on the Solent.

I always like." The garden was illumined by electric light; "magical. They danced afterwards, but I escaped at 11 o'clock. . . . On Wednesday there will be a real Ball which I shall not attend, as I shall be in my first sleep before the first guest arrives." It was less easy to write of political events—"Politics are more confused than ever; no one sees light." A spell of severe weather confined him to his house:

To Lady Chesterfield

19 Curzon Street,
January 20th, 1881

I did not go out on Tuesday, being in a state of stupor and only capable of lying on a sofa by the fire. I cannot write in these moods. I suppose there never was a severer day in this great city. I was not much better yesterday and could not possibly go to the wedding; but I did manage to appear at the later ceremonial, though quite unfit for it. To-day my room is full of sunbeams, but I am told they do not portend a thaw.

As I did not hear from you till last night about your brother, I assumed affairs were better and I hope I was not wrong.

The Wigan Election is the first evidence of an English reaction against the disgraceful and disastrous incidents of the last five months. So long as it was only the Irish Landlords in danger, or the Irish Peasantry, John Bull seemed quite indifferent; but the moment an innocent little English boy was blown up their minds seemed suddenly open to the crisis. It is understood that the Government are in possession of Fenian Schemes and secrets to blow up all the public buildings of the country, and to commence measures when the opportunity is favorable.

I hope you continue quite well.

Yours ever,

B

1,000 thanks for a rose that was quite sweet.

19 Curzon Street,
January 26th, 1881

My dearest friend,

The weather has completely upset me and I really cannot fight against it any more. As they say, it would kill a horse. I was in hopes to have called on you to-day; but the moment I breathe the air, even in furs and a close carriage, the asthmatic seizure comes on. I was obliged to return and shall, if possible, not go out again till the wind changes.

You have sent me many seasonable gifts; I wish I had appetite to do justice to your munificent bounty, but without exercise or air for nearly a month my appetite has disappeared.

I have sent you a humble brace of woodcocks.

Yours ever,

B

This was the last letter that he wrote to Lady Chesterfield. To Lady Bradford he continued to write, though at increasing intervals, up to the middle of March—within a week or ten days of his final illness which led to his death on April 19th:

19 Curzon Street,
February 1st, 1881

The House of Commons is still sitting, having had a whole night of it and, as yet, half of this day. I don't see the end of it. We are the laughing stock of Europe.

I dined on Saturday at Granville's; a pleasant party. I sate next to Princess Louise who never looked prettier—and on Sunday I dined with Lady Lonsdale, my lord away. Very amusing. Louise and Harty-Tarty were there—the Cadogans, H. Chaplins, Sir Charles Dilke; all very good company and talked well; Harty-T. particularly, who is a clever fellow and with some humor.

I am suffering, however, very much from asthma, which is detestable.

Monty has come back from Sandringham. I suspect a party of gigantic dullness.

Yours ever,

B

19 Curzon Street,
February 3rd, 1881

I don't know who are the reviewers of "Endymion" either in the *Edinburgh* or the *Quarterly*. I heard a rumor that the last was the product of Alfred Austin, whose pamphlet you so justly admired; but the rumor seemed not to be very authoritative. He is a newish man rising much into notice, and wrote some few years ago a pamphlet on the Bulgarian atrocities which was thought powerful; then, as the present one, in the form of a letter to Gladstone.

We have had a feverish week here and wonderful events in the House of Commons, recalling the days of Charles 1st and the Commonwealth, the 5 members and Pride's Purge. Nobody, as yet, has got any credit except the Tory party, which carried with triumph yesterday its amendments to the Government's Scheme—amendments which were approved of at my house, at a large meeting called at a moment's notice and attended by all the crochetteers of the House of Commons.

My house received them with ease and could at any time accommodate 200. It is agreeable and convenient in every respect.

Yours ever,

B

19 Curzon Street,
February 9th, 1881

There is to be a great battle in the Lords on Candahar on the 24th inst., and I have some hope that the Government may be forced to "repudiate" their rash and malicious decision on this subject.

I saw your sister to-day driving in the Park; so she is better, but still suffering. The westerly wind and the sunbeams allowed me also to move and breathe, but my sufferings have been also great during the last month though I have not wearied you about them.

There is a great deal of news every day, but nothing to write about.

This afternoon there comes an account of fresh fighting in the Transvaal, and it is said the Boers were repulsed in all directions (but not their great post, the scene of the last battle); but that the British loss is very heavy. I fear there is no doubt about the latter, though the "defeat in all directions" is very vague.

I saw Newport to-day who told me Ida was with you, which must be a great pleasure to you.

Yours ever,

B

19 Curzon Street,
February 12th, 1881

I am quite ashamed of sending these stupid lines in return for your amusing letters but nothing happens, or nothing which one can write about.

Alas! Alas! Monty leaves me again, and for quite an indefinite time. Indeed, I think the prospect is that he will remain at Algiers, or some similar place, for the whole of the spring and summer. His sister cannot get rid of her fever, and her physician writes that he had better join her as soon as possible.

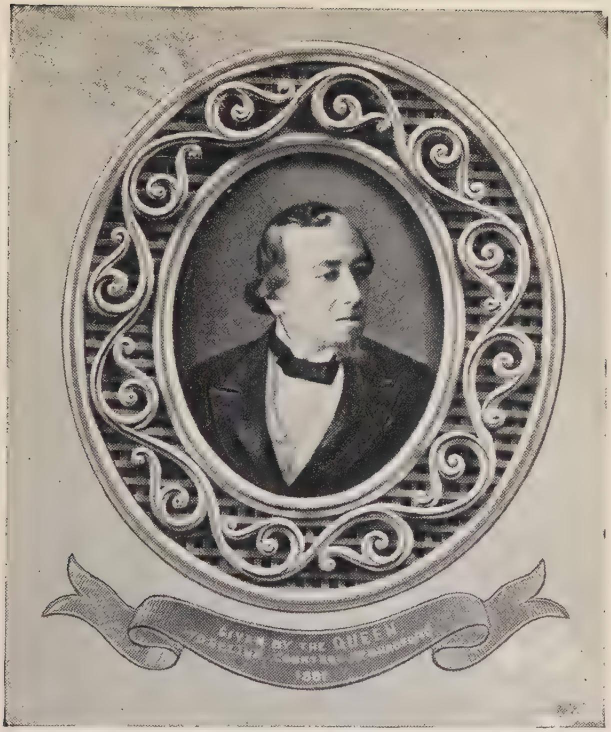
In the midst of preparation for a great debate, having to see crowds of people and to hold meetings, I lose the chief of my staff; my correspondence alone will overwhelm me. It is impossible to teach a new secretary his work.

I don't know who has been talking nonsense to you about the lady you mention, but I dined with her a good while ago and have never seen her since. She is, or has been, at Trentham where I was invited, but declined.

Yours ever,

B

A whole month now elapses before he writes what proved to be the last two letters of this remarkable correspondence:


GIVEN BY THE QUEEN
1881

MINIATURE OF DISRAELI GIVEN BY THE QUEEN TO LADY BRADFORD

19 Curzon Street,
March 11th, 1881

Dear Ida has just been to see me. She did not look at all like an invalid; but very well and very pretty. I suppose the magic of this renovating day had quite cured her. I was sorry to hear that she was going to-morrow to Brighton. I was in hopes I might have seen a little of her.

There is not the slightest truth in the . . . political rumors you mention. Sheer club gossip.

The dinner yesterday went off, I believe, very well; but I was obliged to receive my guests with a stick and, while they enquired after my gout, required their sympathies for greater sufferings of which they knew nothing. As the gentlemen smoked after dinner, though not long, that gave me an opportunity of inhaling some of my poison in the form of a cigarette, and nobody found it out. My gout is not worse and I must hope the sun and the western breeze may mitigate my greater evil; but they have not yet.

Your arm will be very agreeable to me in our morning walks, which I hope are at hand.

Yours ever,

B

19 Curzon Street,
Wednesday, March 16th, 1881

A hurried line, for I hardly think this will reach you before your departure; just to say that I trust I shall see you to-morrow, if I call as I hope about six o'clock.

The Prince of Wales does not, as at present advised, go to the funeral; and as he can't go even to the play he has quartered himself on his various intimates for daily dinner, "quite quiet." He has seen a great deal in his fortnight's absence; all the great men and, I suppose, some of the famous women. Bismarck, who in two hours did not give him the opportunity of "getting in a word," and Gambetta with whom he breakfasted "quite private"—alone, and who seems to have been as loquacious as his German rival. I hope what you intimate of Lord Rowton may have some foundation.

I am very unwell and go about as little as I can, but after an engagement of five weeks have a great diplomatic banquet to-day, which will finish me. I thought, when I was obliged to accept it, the five weeks never would elapse.

Ever,

B

During his fatal illness writing became impossible for him; and when the end seemed near Lord Rowton wrote to Lady Bradford, then at Weston:[4]

19 Curzon Street,
Sunday, April 10th, 1881

My dear Lady Bradford,

I have, indeed, not had the heart to write!

I know how *you* are feeling for the poor sufferer here, and with us! The doctors have pronounced almost their one favorable word since I came on Thursday morning and say "there is a slight improvement of strength" this afternoon.

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[4] The originals of the two letters from Lord Rowton are in the possession of Lady Beatrice Pretyman. They were printed in the authorised *Life of Disraeli* by Mr. G. E. Buckle; and my acknowledgements are due to the Beaconsfield Trustees and the *Times* for permission to reproduce them here.

But, when one sees *how* weak he is and how little *real nourishment* he is taking, the words scarcely raise in me a hope.

God grant I am wrong! It *may* well be!—for the doctors are by no means hopeless. But somehow I feel as if *I* knew better than they! A new mechanical bed has relieved him much—and his suffering is chiefly when difficulty in expectoration comes.

He still shrinks from seeing me! He knows I am always here, day and night, and I have begged him to give no thought to me till we can meet without effort to him. The doctors wish him to be *as quiet as possible* and, I think, even were *you* here, would combat your seeing him! He does not try to read letters.

I have seen him often and do not see any bad change in his face! But the weakness! And how can we overcome it!! He is being wonderfully nursed and, they say, *is* so gentle and clever and kind. All about him are charmed.

He begs to be told the worst—if it is to be; and I have told the doctors they must do so should it become evident. He talks of death without a shade of fear.

I will telegraph to you as often as you wish.

I cannot write much! Ten days of anxiety and nights of little sleep have rather shaken me.

I am going to ask Jenner to call again to-morrow morning.

Yours ever affec.,

Monty

From the same source she received an account of the final scene:

19 Curzon Street,
Friday night, April 22nd, 1881

My dear Lady Bradford,

Since that dreadful morning, I may say I have been *unable* to write. To-day, I have been better; but I had not a moment. When I was at Osborne—where I had hoped for time to send you a few lines—I found my every moment taken up by the Queen, with whom I passed hours telling her all she wished to know of Her loved Friend. And She did love him.

The last day and hours were distressing from his labored breathing; but the last minutes and moments were very quiet and evidently quite painless. The very end was strikingly dignified and fine and as I looked on his dear face, just at the moment when his spirit left him, I thought that I had never seen him look so triumphant and full of victory.

In all those last sad days he was so brave and gentle, so wonderfully considerate and good to all, that I felt I should have loved him more than ever had he lived.

He often said he knew he had no chance, and seemed to wish almost that the doctors would tell him so. But they did not know—or would not tell him—and so he glided on till the ship of his life got among the clouds and the breakers and he began to sink without knowing where he was. And so it came that he had not the opportunity of sending a word to some to whom, as I thought I could see, he would have sent a loving message had he known what was so near. I never doubted what the end must be. I knew too well how little of reserve force for long past was left in him.

I am very unhappy! But I won't dwell on that. My life is dreadfully changed. But I have often thought of you and Lady Chesterfield and known how your dear kind hearts were aching.

Will you give her my love? and ask her to forgive my not writing to her?

Indeed, till to-day, I have scarcely been physically able to do so. Day and night was I with him trying to help him over all his pains and troubles as each arose, or to dispel some of the confusions which came over his poor tired brain. It was weary work that sitting with my hand in his in the night watches, trying to guide that mighty mind as a child has to be led!—that trying to be cheerful when I could scarcely help weeping! And I was thankful more than I could ever have deemed possible, when the great peace came over him.

Will you let me know when you come to London? It will be a real comfort to see you. There is none greater than to give and receive sympathy.

I am ever,

Your affte.

Monty

How Lady Chesterfield will miss him! I feel *for her* so deeply.

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